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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

READER RESPONSE: A TEACHER RESEARCHER PERSPECTIVE

BY

JOAN ARLENE DEWAR ©

A thesis submitted to

the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL, 1994

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DEDICATION

To
my late parents
who began my love of children's literature

and to
My loving husband, Garry.

ABSTRACT

This qualitative teacher researcher study explores the nature of literary responses constructed by grade three students as they actively participate in their classroom reading response workshop.

Seven grade three students share their personal and associative responses to a piece of literature, The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks, firstly from an individual point of view and secondly from a collaborative point of view. Several themes emerge as the children read, respond and confer with others.

Data were collected with field notes, audio and video tapes, response journals, conference conversations and student reflective interviews. Analysis revealed in a 'Bleichian sense' that students were able to respond to the literature using a variety of communication systems. The teacher researcher learned how to be a better listener and how to use teacher student reflection to improve the quality of instruction and learning.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Beginnings of the Study

> *So Eeyore stood there, gazing sadly at the ground,*
> *and Winnie-the-Pooh walked all round him once.*
> *'Why, what's happened to your tail?' he said in surprise.*
> *'What **has** happened to it?' said Eeyore.*
> *'It isn't there!'*
> *'Are you sure?'*
> *'Well, either a tail **is** there or it isn't there. You can't*
> *make a mistake about it. And yours **isn't** there!*
> *'Then what is?'*
> *'Nothing.'*
> *'Let's have a look,' said Eeyore, and he turned slowly round*
> *to the place where his tail had been a little while ago, and*
> *then, finding that he couldn't catch it up, he turned round the*
> *other way, until he came back to where he was at first, and*
> *then he put his head down and looked between his front legs,*
> *and at last he said, with a long, sad sigh, 'I believe you're right.'*
> (Milne, p. 46).

My search for the focus of a teacher researcher study has its roots in my own experiences with literature as a pre-school child, as a student, and as a practicing teacher.

Like the majority of families in our farming community in my early years, we were unable to establish much of a library. Farm work was just never done, making it difficult for my parents to find time to sit with us and read from one of the few treasured and well used hand-me-down favorites that we did have. We were fortunate, however, that our mother had been a teacher until she was married, and she realized the importance of reading with children. They made

the time, somehow, and I vividly recall perching, either on their laps, or the wide arm of a living room chair as my mum or dad would read the chapters of Winnie the Pooh to me. I would listen intently to Pooh's adventures, as we read the pages together. Occasionally, they would stop to hear my personal responses, always listening with fascination and understanding, and supporting me as I learned to construct and communicate my own interpretations of the literature we shared.

This experience began the development of my love of children's literature. I remember my feelings of anticipation and excitement as I waited patiently for the reading of the next chapter. I was captivated by the language that introduced me to tales of life in lands that were different from my own. I would imagine myself suspended beneath a balloon, floating above our farm yard along with Pooh Bear, and I remember giggling until my sides hurt when Pooh got stuck in the rabbit hole. Cinderella was another of my childhood favorites, because when I listened to the story it was so easy to enter a world of fantasy. I became Cinderella herself, stepping into a pumpkin coach pulled by the field mice that lived in the fields around our house, traveling down the long country lane to the road that led to our community hall, where I would find my Prince Charming.

My older brother, Gordon, had been going to school for a couple of years at this time, and he, too would deign to read to me in spite of our tenuous relationship as siblings. One of his favorites was Little Black Sambo. He would read the story to me, and afterwards we would romp around outside amidst our evergreens in search of mangoes. Treasure Island was another story Gordon

would read to me whenever I begged him. After a couple of chapters, we would race out to the pond behind the house, and act out our fantasies - sailing (pushing) a 'pirate ship' (homemade raft) through the raging seas (shallow, muddy dugout) to a small island (mound of dirt) nearby. Many times we would come home muddy and wet, anticipating the wrath of our mother as she saw the laundry pile getting larger by the minute. I don't recall if we were ever punished for it, but I will always remember the adventures we lived from the pages of a book.

When I left the safety of home to begin my formal schooling, I looked forward excitedly to being in a place that I thought would have lots of books. I knew the school had books, because the stories Gordon read to me were ones he brought from school. But, when I began grade one, I was shocked to discover that there were no storybooks in my classroom and no library in my school. All I remember are the Dick and Jane readers that I could take home for "free reading".

GUESS
"Jane, Jane!" said Dick.
"Come and play.
I want to play something.
Will you play?"
Jane said, "I will play."

"What am I ?" said Dick.
"Can you guess?
I am not Father.
I can run and jump.
I can play ball.
Bow-wow, bow-wow!"
Jane said, "I can guess.
You are Spot."
(Gage, pp. 24-25)

Before long, with great disappointment, I realized that story reading at school was a completely different experience from story reading at home. Sometimes the teacher would read us classics such as Aesop's Fables, and Mother Goose rhymes, but these sessions would be prefaced by instructions to "sit up straight," and "be quiet", which served to discourage any overt student responses during or after the readings. At other times, the teacher would read short stories from our reading workbooks as we followed along. I was expected to remain quiet, listen attentively and respond if questions pertaining to the story were directed to me. The classroom atmosphere was quite tense. At the completion of the stories, the discussion would focus only on the specific questions that were listed in our reading workbooks. Now, I sadly realize, the methods used by that teacher almost stifled my interest and motivation to read and respond to literature. How different things could have been for everyone if the pedagogy of those times had included the teaching of reading beyond literal comprehension!

Similar experiences of frustration and disenchantment that I experienced in junior high and high school literature classes reinforced my feelings that most assignments requiring response to literature involved reading the selection independently, and writing out the 'correct' answers to questions pertaining to the literature under study. On one occasion, I was asked my opinion regarding a poetry selection by Robert Browning. I remember the terrible feelings of embarrassment when my teacher told me how wrong my interpretation was in terms of the author's intent.

At University, my first memory of English 210 was an assignment involving a 'personal' response to a theme in Othello. The professor encouraged us to write our own ideas and feelings about the racial prejudices evinced in the play. I was so excited! At last I would really be able to express myself! Confidently, I began to write. I felt proud of my finished product, and eagerly awaited its return, a little anxious about what the professor's comments would be. A few days later, as I took the graded assignment from the hands of my professor, our eyes met, and a sudden horror stirred within me - I knew, even before looking at it, that, in the opinion of this person, *my* interpretation did not measure up. As I went over the red-marked paper I realized that he had completely disregarded my feelings and opinions. Instead, he had expected me to regurgitate *his* personal views. Being an obedient student, I understood that the only way to pass this course was to do so on all future assignments.

During the second year of University my studies centred on teacher practice in all curriculum areas. I was particularly interested in learning to teach children how to read, because I had been a slow reader in school, often feeling stressed during timed reading tests. More than anything, I wanted to learn how to help children become *excellent* readers. At this time, the basal reading approach was believed to be the best reading practice so, once I became a practicing elementary teacher, I tried the basal approach like most beginning teachers did. I remember the nightmare I experienced trying to teach four reading groups in an hour and a half! I was doing more planning and juggling than teaching in order to keep my class of thirty- two grade two and three students busy. In my frustration, I remember calling up a language arts

consultant to get some help, but when she visited my classroom she told me I was doing a fine job. As a result, I continued to incorporate the basal approach into my reading practice for a while. But, eventually my frustration with the situation led me to renew my interest in children's literature, and include it in my teaching practice. At first, I began to read aloud to my children as often as I dared. I was careful not to spend too much time reading aloud, because I felt I was using classroom time that should have been spent teaching specific reading skills. I soon became conscious of the positive effect literature was having on my students' interest and attitude toward school, so over the years literature has become an integral part of my teaching. I have explored ways to incorporate it into all themes of study.

As I prepared for a theme of study, I would choose appropriate literature for read aloud selections and as I read, I encouraged my students to respond with their own interpretations. Sometimes I would ask comprehension questions pertaining to the story, but, as I reflect now, I believe I had a narrow view of personal response. I viewed personal responses as 'knowledge of text' responses, and I used them as indicators to prove that the children understood the story. The more I continued to provide opportunities and encouragement to children to share their personal responses to questions about the text, the more I realized that the responses elicited from children were not what I expected. I recall such comments as "she's just like my Nanna" after reading Grandpa's Slippers, or "my friends and I have a Roxaboxen in the ravine" when we talked

about the book Roxaboxen, and we all laughed heartily when a girl said: "I think my little brother is very pesty like Ramona," referring to the story of Ramona. I was amazed at the diversity and creativity of responses. Their responses reflected life experiences, an understanding of themselves and others, special feelings and a sense of excitement about the story, beyond an understanding of the text. However, I continued to wonder and ask myself questions about the role personal response played in student's learning. Were these personal response activities a waste of valuable teaching time? Would my supervisors, other teachers and parents view these activities as off-task and purely activities for enjoyment, rather than learning? How should I be reacting to these personal responses? What did other teachers do? It was through this "sense of dissonance or conflict or uncertainty" (Odell, 1987, p.128) that I began to formulate the questions for this teacher researcher study.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this teacher researcher study was to explore, in the context of a regular classroom learning situation, the nature of students' individual and communal responses to a piece of literature entitled, The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks. All students were asked to respond to the literature in communication systems of their preference. The nature of the individual and communal responses of seven grade three students is described and analyzed in terms of a Bleichian approach to reader response (Bleich, 1975).

Guiding Questions

Throughout the study, I worked closely with my students as their teacher researcher. Several questions served to guide me as we lived each day, and I invited my students to respond to literature in a personal way.

1) What is the nature of students' responses to literature in a reader response workshop classroom?

2) What is a literature-based program like, if students are given the choice to respond using a variety of communication systems?

3) How does a teacher researcher support and promote personal responses?

4) How does collaboration effect student's personal responses to literature?

Significance of the Study

Most existing research in the area of reader response reports results with participants who are adolescents or young adults, rather than young children in elementary schools. This study contributes to the existing theoretical knowledge of reader response at the primary level. It also has pedagogical significance for elementary teachers who are interested in curriculum design related to literature-based instruction and personal response to literature. The extension of personal response into a variety of communication systems will also assist teachers who are questioning and exploring reader response strategies for classroom practice.

Limitations of the Study

This research study was limited to the personal responses of seven children to one piece of literature. The results therefore cannot be generalized beyond the sample participants.

Abbreviations

RRW: Reading Response Workshop

RRJ: Reading Response Journal

LLPS: Language Learning Program of Studies (Elementary) A.1

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a review of theories pertaining to reader response, language learning and communication strategies that express personal response. Just as my classroom experience has shown that student responses to a particular piece of literature can vary, my studies revealed that researchers have explained reader response theory using a variety of theoretical perspectives. The following theoretical perspectives provided the context for this study.

Reader Response Theory

Historical Beginnings

Historically, the concept of literary response can be traced back to the time of Aristotle. As Aristotle (cited in Adler, 1978, p.3) speculated about and tried to explain the world around him, he relied on "his common sense as well as his common experience "to determine his philosophical beliefs about right and wrong. Aristotle spent much of his scholarly life criticizing the poetry and the plays portrayed in the theatres. It is from these written criticisms that others have interpreted his theory. Aristotle believed that theatre experiences shaped a person's thinking as well as their way of life.

Aristotle referred to the emotional experience of theatre in terms of "katharsis" (cited in Schaper, 1968; and Allan,1970). Aristotelian "katharsis" is

explained in two ways: either "the purgation of emotions" or "providing an outlet for pent-up emotions." Schaper (1968) contends that Aristotle's reference to purgation meant:

> *the medical context of healing and curing through expulsion and evacuation of harmful elements* (p.103).

Whereas, Allan (1970) describes the calming interpretation as the

> *indulgence of powerful emotions under conditions contrived for the purpose may calm them and render them less liable to obstruct the rational ordering of life* (p.155).

However, Gulley (1979), in his "katharsis" interpretation, alludes to both the evocation and the regulation of emotions:

> *imaginative literature can regulate the quality and the intensity of particular emotions so as to achieve what are considered desirable results* (p.171).

Despite this uncertainty in determining whether Aristotle meant that a vicarious emotional experience resulted in a total *'cleansing'* of the emotion or a *'calming'* of the emotion, evidence seems clear that Aristotelian philosophy points toward the importance of emotional experiences in pursuing "the good life," or "happiness". In addition, a theatrical experience for Aristotle (cited in Adler, 1978, p.78) was thought to provide the person with a 'practical' view of knowledge, which was a necessary dimension of the "good life" or "happiness" that everyone seeks.

As with Aristotle, Coleridge (cited in Corrigan, 1982, p.40), a prominent English writer and literary critic in the 1790's, saw a connection between literature, response and life experience. He believed that poetry themes were "firmly rooted in the sweat and mire of daily events." Literary criticism, as experienced by Coleridge, moved away from Aristotle's single focus of "katharsis" to encompass other disciplines. Coleridge (cited in Sharma, 1982, (p.51) is acclaimed to have awakened the world to a "new era of criticism" by "making literary criticism interdisciplinary". He was compelled to write and respond to poetry in a way that revealed his political, social, and religious beliefs. Certainly he believed his literary criticisms were significant, because they helped others understand the conditions of the time. In addition, Coleridge (cited in Corrigan, 1982, p. 43) felt he had a responsibility to the public to write his thoughts so others would actively read and respond to them:

> *Whatever one's political position, social action becomes equated with meaning, and if literature wishes to have meaning it must defend itself as a form of social action.*

Clearly, the research points toward the importance of literature and literary response during Coleridge's time.

In the early 1900's, Freud (1966) began his work on the psychological development of the human mind. With some roots in Aristotle's 'katharsis' theory, Freud extended the theory by using 'free association', 'dreams' and 'slips of the tongue' as the means of uncovering the repressed feelings of

patients to determine the cause of their emotional imbalance, and to understand human behavior. Unlike Aristotle, Freud believed that feelings were 'repressed' in the subconscious and the process of psychoanalysis revealed latent feelings which could be objectively analyzed. He viewed his therapy process as a "rational approach" to dealing with "superstitions and magical wishes" and charged that the exploration of feelings, subjective phenomenon, was indeed scientific in nature. Psychoanalysis was Freud's way of trying to understand the natural world and human feelings in a "systematic, scientific and organized " way (Kline, 1984, p.5-43).

Freud (cited in Bleich, 1975) justified "reality" as the "epistemological principle of subjectivity" that was constructed inside the person's mind, and released outwardly. The personal interpretation began with the individual, not with the object, or the situation independent of the mind. Freud's use of critical subjectivity demonstrates a change in the scientific interpretation of the world from a focus on purely objective phenomenon, to subjective and psychological phenomenon. He claimed that, in any scientific inquiry, the "investigating mind is always part of what is being investigated". This type of scientific investigation is the basis of his science of psychoanalysis (p.742-744).

Modern Theory

Practical

Freud's focus on subjectivity and psychological interpretation in scientific inquiry undoubtedly had some influence on the shift in reader-response criticism

that was evident by I. A. Richard's publication Practical Criticism (1929). Richards discussed two perspectives of poetry response: the prominent New Critic interpretation that centered on the assumption that one objective meaning was found in the text itself, and a new view that considered a subjective response to poetry to be a form of worthwhile expression. Richards (cited in Sharma, 1979, p. 49) adopted a broad- based view of literary criticism that included both beliefs:

> *Literary criticism must be concerned, first and last--whatever comes between--with the poem as it is read and as what it represents is felt.*

In taking this particular stance, I. A. Richards attempted to bridge the gap between scientific and psychological interpretation, and to enhance the understanding of language. Severe criticism by other literary critics eventually led Richards to modify his stance, and introduce the idea of "normative readings" (Bleich, 1975, p.111). Thus, subjective responses were encouraged, but they needed to be justified as right or wrong. Bleich (1975) points out that Richard's idea of "normative readings" is incompatible with literary response because of the "continuing disagreement with regard to what constitutes a 'correct' reading" (p.111).

Psychological

Following Richard's interpretations of reader response, the work of Lesser (1957) and Holland (1968) continued the focus of reader response

theory toward a psychological stance and the principle of critical subjectivity. Holland (1976) attempted to explain the literary transaction by paying attention to what was happening in the reader's mind during, and after, a reading experience. He explained his stance as the "science of human uniqueness" (p.224). By placing emphasis on the reader, rather than the text or the author's intent, he concluded that "the reader brings an expectation to the reading act which determines whether the literature selection is treated as truth or pleasure". Holland's model of literary response, although it considered the reader and the importance of aesthetic response, ultimately focused on an "intellectually informative" explanation of the text which continued to align with the previous "objective and formal" beliefs put forward by the New Critics perspective (p.227).

Transactional

Rosenblatt (1938), in Literature for Exploration, introduces us to her theory of literary interaction, which she describes as an active and personal event between the reader and the text. It is defined as a "live circuit set up between reader and text", whereby the reader and the text affect each other in equally and important ways and an "imaginative experience" emerges from the process (p.25). Rosenblatt claims that meaning is brought to life in the interactive relationship between the reader and the text. In her later work, (1978), The Reader, the Text and the Poem, Rosenblatt moves away from viewing the reading event as an interactive and linear process, and suggests it is a "transactional" and circular process, where all elements of the event shape

the meaning created. She makes a distinction between two stances of the reader; the efferent and the aesthetic. She suggests that these stances are best explained as the "focus of the reader's attention" during the actual reading of a particular text. In bringing the text to mind, the reader constructs meaning and by doing so "evokes the poem". The reader who "evokes the poem" efferently will concentrate primarily on "the information, the concepts, the guides to action" that can be extracted from the text after the reading; whereas the reader who "evokes the poem" aesthetically will focus attention upon the actual experience "he is living through during the relationship with that particular text" (p.27). Essentially, the efferent reader's purpose is to actively seek information, and the aesthetic reader's purpose is to experience the text itself, while attending to emotional, as well as intellectual, experience. Rosenblatt considers the possibility that active readers transacting with a particular text do not restrict their reading to either an efferent or aesthetic stance, but rather fluctuate from one to the other as the need arises. She sees "most reading as hovering near the middle of the continuum, moving the centre of attention toward the efferent or aesthetic ends of the spectrum" (p.37).

Rosenblatt discusses the importance of these stances as they relate to the aspect of personal response. Since "each encounter between a reader and a text is a unique event" that recognizes the "fusion of thoughts and feelings", it follows that each personal response will be characterized by some element of difference (p.36). She refers to personal response as an interpretation that allows the reader to "describe in some way the nature of the lived-through evocation of the work" (p.69). She maintains that in the school setting students

generally are asked and rewarded for efferent responses, therefore denying the reader the opportunity to "synthesize associations, feelings, attitudes and ideas that the text arouses and establish a meaningful structure or thought" (p.25).

Rosenblatt's theory has dominated the teaching strategies which align themselves with a 'whole language' approach to the teaching of literature, as cited by Froese (1990):

> *Encouraging children to respond to literature they enjoy is an important consideration of a whole-language program (p.61).*

Despite this fact it seemed necessary to consider other theories to determine a broader perspective of reader response. The orientation of David Bleich was investigated.

Subjective

The work of David Bleich (1976, 1975) leads us to consider another perspective of literary response. His stance as a subjective critic suggests that responses are constructed by the reader as "fundamental acts of the mind" (p.457). The reader makes "the work of art a part of his own mind" and the text is considered "a symbolic object" that is "wholly dependent on a perceiver for its existence" (p.750). Bleich (1975) alludes to the social nature of knowing by stating that during the process of interpreting symbols of the text, the reader constructs new knowledge which is perceived as "mechanisms of emotion" that have "important connections with the things that most concern and preoccupy

them" at the time of reading (p.750). Responses made by subjective critics are not only perceived and constructed by the reader, but also reflect the life experience of the reader.

The focus of Bleich's stance to personal response is emotional. If students respond to literature purely by how they feel, they will experience an abundance of "new knowledge" pertaining to the literature discussed, thus enhancing the "authority of the community" (p.750). Subjective critical responses are stimulated aesthetically by introducing students to the components of *perceptive, affective and associative response.* These three components are inseparable, and work together to shape each personal response. Bleich (1975) defines:

> *perceptive response -- a response that says what the poem says*
> *affective response -- a simple and raw emotional description about anger, love, jealousy, indignation or contentment, without reference to the reason why the individual felt the emotion.*
> *associative response -- a response that focuses on the roots of the feelings and explains why the person feels as they do it is similar to free association in that the person must respond spontaneously without censorship (p.21-48).*

Bleich (1975) justifies this approach to literary criticism as a way to "understand how people respond emotionally and then translate these responses into thoughts and judgments" (p.15). He claims the teacher plays an instrumental role in bringing about the readers' awareness and understanding of how emotional life can enhance intellectual development. Students who have the opportunity to study their feelings seriously by working with *perceptive*, *affective* and *associative* responses will not only be able to reveal their own patterns of response, but also extend their understanding of themselves and others.

However, Bleich (1975) cautions the teacher who utilizes this response method to be sensitive to each student, and to refrain from performing a "Freudian analysis of the association". The student is not being analyzed, but rather encouraged to reach an understanding of the situation or experience. The focus is an "analysis of the response" not an "analysis of the person" (p.13).

Bleich (1975) adds another dimension to personal response as he points out its importance as a "communal act" (p.80). He explains that students have a personal need to discuss responses with each other so they can test out their ideas, find out about themselves and their feelings, and develop a sense of acceptance and security within their particular group. Students learn from and develop an appreciation of others' points of view. The act of sharing *perceptive*, *affective* and *associative* responses in a group situation helps students "validate at least some of their own feelings by discovering them in others", thus fulfilling the basic universal need of belonging (p.81). This process of sharing

with others also provides students the opportunity to become aware of "group values", and to actively reshape and establish new values specific to their culture and their age (p.87). Group experiences in the classroom become the source from which students derive their constructed meanings, so the "study of literature and art cannot proceed independently of the study of the people involved in the artistic transaction" (p.755). Students are eager and curious to learn from each other, and about each other. As they listen to what others are thinking, they compare thoughts, either privately or publicly. Thus, their thoughts become interwoven with thoughts of others.

Bleich (1976) advocates both individual and communal response, and claims that subjective criticism must be considered in the study of literature, because the relationship between our feelings and our minds is at the *"root of our literary experiences"* (p.755).

Reader Response Research

Recent researchers who have applied reader response theories to *elementary* classroom practice have identified a variety of influences that contribute to the nature of the reader's response.

Cullinan, Harwood, and Galda (1983) studied developmental differences, and found a strong correlation between developmental trends, story recall and schema theory. Fourth graders responded primarily by retelling the text and sixth graders used symbolic meanings. Hickman (1981) researched young

children's naturally occurring responses to literature in classroom and home settings. She revealed seven different categories of responses that explained their connection between literature and themselves. These categories showed developmental patterns, because they were relevant to the specific age of the respondents. The response categories were: listening behaviors, browsing, acting on impulse to share, retelling, actions and drama, making pictures and writing.

Sims (1983) studied a black girl's response to literature and determined that strong responses were dependent on the type of reading material. Culturally valid literature resulted in strong responses, and culturally invalid literature caused little or no response. She also found a lack of culturally valid literature available in schools. Galda (1982) researched elementary student responses to novels, and found that the readers had distinctively individual styles of response. The diversity of responses was found to be related to the amount of exposure to literature, and the student's view of reality. Pillar (1983) examined second, fourth and sixth graders and found that young students made moral judgments while responding to fables. Two studies with elementary students looked at the role of the teacher. McClure (1985), in a study of poetry response, disclosed evidence for the importance of a supportive environment during literary responses of elementary students, while Kiefer (1983) studying the responses of young children in a multi-age grade one/two class found that responses to picture books were influenced by the teacher's demonstration of expected responses. Teachers were also instrumental in providing and ensuring the environment was safe.

Barone (1990) focused on the use of response journals with second graders, and found it to be a valid tool for recording responses to literature, as did Kelly (1990), who examined grade three responses to read-alouds. Other studies (Galda, 1988; Hancock,1992) recommend response journals as a way to implement writing into literature studies.

Dekker (1991) conducted a two year teacher researcher study in a class of second graders, and a combined class of second and third graders. Using written reading logs as the means of response, she discovered there was a range and character to the responses, and that the respondents developed positive behaviors about books. Vandergrift (1990) conducted a study with 'young people' (11-12 years old) and developed a response model that had students go from a personal 'felt meaning' to a 'community meaning' response (p.38).

Other studies, (Gambell, 1986) provide rationales and step by step instructions for the implementation of a 'reader-centered' response to literature (p.120). Bogdan (1984, 1986, 1987) urges teachers to approach the teaching of literature dialectically, and has identified four levels of literary response:

(1) the precritical, or undirected emotional level
(2) the critical or analytical level
(3) the postcritical level, which encompasses both feeling and understanding
(4) the autonomous level, characterized by a full, undirected literary response.

She maintains that the intensity of the literature study relates to the level of response. Some studies point to development and its relationship to response.

The research of Protherough (1983), which examined children's responses to fiction, indicates that readers respond to the text in stages of development that range from simple to advanced. These stages of response are age dependent.

As indicated, children's response to literature has emerged as a focus for investigation for some researchers, but most studies specific to the nature of subjective literary response have focused on the junior high, senior high, college and adult level. For example, Hansson (1973) concluded from his study with older students that the criteria for importance used by students as they respond to literature did not coincide with the criteria chosen by teachers. Schaars (1988) applied Rosenblatt's theory to a study of eleventh grade literature, and found the "natural response to literature" enlightening (p.57). Myers (1988) has generated a list of "twenty (better) questions", which he uses as a model for the literary responses of his middle school students, and claims the emphasis on perception, feelings, and associations is positive because his students view themselves as "critics and meaning-carriers" (p.65). Many others (Athanases,1988; Beach, and Wendler, 1987; Cox and Many, 1992; and Lindberg, 1988) argue strongly for the importance of personal response for older students, but restrict response to oral and written language response.

Despite the fact that a few studies (Barone, 1990; Dekker,1991) have been conducted at the grade three level, to date I have been unable to find any

studies dealing specifically with subjective reader response of grade three students could be found.

Language Learning Theory

The theoretical orientations of Bruner (1986), Harste (1984,1991), Smith (1985, 1988) and Vygotsky (1978, 1986) serve to explain the rationale and the philosophy of language learning in the context of this teacher researcher RRW. Language is the medium through which this RRW was facilitated, and these theories encompass the following fundamental principles found in the LLPS (revised,1991). Language learning occurs:

- when meaning is central
- it builds on what learners already know
- from implicit and explicit demonstrations
- in supportive environments
- through interaction.

Bruner (1986), a cognitive psychologist, explains language learning in terms of transactionalism. He believes that we learn by negotiating new meanings from our existing knowledge within an interactive social context. Our existing knowledge is represented by our 'reality of the world' or how we see the world. When we communicate with others, we entertain and try to understand another perspective of our reality. As we try to understand this new perspective

we negotiate and create a new meaning or perspective of our existing reality. Bruner's idea of "multiple perspectives" suggests that when students interact with each other and have the ability to understand others' perspectives, they are able to negotiate new or different meanings, and learning occurs. Bruner also discusses the point of sharing as it applies to learning. He says that "most learning in most settings is a communal activity, a sharing of the culture" (p.127).

As well, Bruner makes reference to the idea of "scaffolding" (p.74). He explains scaffolding as an interaction whereby the adult "supports the child in achieving an intended outcome". Bruner's theory of transactionalism is a model for learning where all "possibilities" are explored, as well as valued, and shared in the learning culture. Bruner's beliefs have positive implications to the construction of personal responses to literature.

Vygotsky's (1986) social interaction theory stresses the importance of the learner's interactions with others in the development of shared understandings and meanings. He believes that social experiences develop learning on two levels, interpersonal and intrapersonal. Initially, the learner experiences interactions with others and then this experience is internalized to become an inner thought. He also discusses learning experiences in terms of the development of "spontaneous" to "scientific" concepts. He believes that learners' first encounters with the world around them are narrow, factual and "spontaneous", but as learners interact more widely with the world, the concepts developed are broader and more complex, or "scientific" in nature. Vygotsky

also believes that all students can reach a level of "potential development" if they are given "adult guidance," or the opportunity to enter into "collaboration with more capable peers" (p.86). This idea known as the "zone of proximal development," has implications to the role of a teacher researcher. Vygotsky's theory of language leading thought (spontaneous to scientific) permeates the fabric of learning that occurs in a reader response workshop.

Harste's (1991) theory of language learning provides a link between learning and personal response. He indicates the importance of social relationships to learning, saying that the paradigm of 'whole language' or 'theory of voice', allows students to become *personally* involved in their learning by making connections to the curriculum. Literacy and learning begin with the social relationships established in the classroom. Teachers need to establish social relationships in the classroom that operate and view the "voice" of the learner as the catalyst for learning, and to provide more opportunities for students to expand their communication and sign systems.

Smith (1985, 1988) believes in the power of actively demonstrating and promoting reading and writing, and continually emphasizes the importance of establishing meaningful and common sense purposes for reading and writing. He believes that successful learners are risk-takers, who work in supportive environments and are able to construct their own meaning of the world. He says the foundation of both learning and comprehension is the theory of the world that every individual has formulated and carries around in his head all the

time. It is this theory that is "the basis of all perception and understanding of the world; it is the root of all learning" (p.79).

In this study, Reader Response theory is viewed as occurring in a social milieu where teacher demonstration and scaffolding will be carefully implemented to develop scientific thought and meaningful learning.

Reader Response Strategies

Literature points to the necessity of facilitating personal response through a variety of communication systems that include oral and written language, art, music and drama and /or movement (Langer, 1942). As students' thoughts develop through their experiences in the world, they learn facts (discursive signs) and values, emotions and beliefs (non-discursive signs). In a reader response workshop that facilitates personal response to literature, it is significant that students are presented with opportunities for response utilizing and encompassing both discursive and non-discursive communication systems.

Oral Language

Responding to literature through talk is a strategy to be used in a RRW classroom. Britton's (1970) research documents the importance of student talk to learning. He makes distinctions between two different roles that talk plays in language learning. Participant talk is explained as the "language that gets things done," and spectator talk is the "language of being and becoming, just for the pleasure of it" (p.124).

Tough (1976, 1979) studied the area of talk, and found that oral language is a "communication system" that develops through the "social interactions" with others (p.8). As students use language in the social contexts of family , friends and school they learn to express and communicate their ideas with others. Continuous use of language influences the way students will "think" and make "interpretations" of their experiences (p.76). Tough also discusses the area of "teacher dialogue" strategies, and maintains that teachers must develop a conscious ability to know what to talk to students about, when to talk, how to talk, and when to listen to what students are saying. Then, teachers will be able to "cognitively" and "intuitively" use talk to maximize the learning potential of students (p.101).

Barton and Booth (1990) present a repertoire of choices for story talk responses because they believe that "there are many learning opportunities that must not be passed up, and children should select and direct their own learning as much as possible" (p.112). For example, some choices suggested are: "gossiping and commenting" about the story, "exploring feelings and thoughts

both inside and outside the story" or "sharing discoveries" about the story (p.114).

Written Language

Writing used as a response to literature can take such forms as "notebooks" (Calkins, 1990; Harwayne, 1992), "narrative inquiries" (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990), or "response journals" (Cullinan and Galda, 1994; Barone, 1990; Kelly, 1990).

Writing is a powerful symbolic form that students may use to represent and explain their personal feelings regarding the literature they read, thus making connections between their own experiences and those portrayed in literature. As Murrary (1990) says, "the act of writing is a constructive, helpful, and necessary process" that writers use to bring forth their "knowing and understanding" about such topics as "death, loss, disease, and pain" (p.2). He has researched many writers who indicate that when they *do* write, it is with a sense of passion that stems from the centre of their human experience. Many writers begin by writing for themselves with the hope that the words will be read and appreciated by others. So, in silence, at their writing place, they search for the right word, phrase, or line that can best describe what they see and feel. What is written becomes their "vision", with hopes that it will ultimately "give voice to the vision of others" (p.34).

Calkins (1986), too, discusses the need for responding in writing: "we write because we want to understand our lives", and it provides a "place for teaching to become deeply personal" (p.6). She believes that both teachers

and children need to be deeply involved in the process of writing, so they can perceive themselves as writers. Providing opportunities for writing in the classroom creates an understanding of the process with its triumphs and struggles (p.9). Calkins (1991) advocates the use of writing "note books", which become a "powerful tool for thinking", because children are involved with the process of "fastening thoughts, observations and feelings onto paper" (p.56). She advocates sharing writing with others and re-reading notebooks as a way of building reflection into the writing process:

> *reflecting on our thoughts, asking questions, letting our insights take root and grow.....underlines thought itself* (p.56).

Narrative inquiry researched by Connelly and Clandinin (1990), and used primarily in researching the lives of teachers and their 'practical knowledge' of their practice and described as "the study of the ways humans experience the world", could prove to be a response strategy for students to use when making sense of literature as they connect it to their "lived experience" (p.2).

Response journals, a medium documented by Barone (1990), Cullinan and Galda (1994), Hancock (1992), Kelly (1990), Larson and Merrion (1987), (cited in Fulwiler) helps students work through their individual thoughts and feelings. Hancock (1992, p.37) suggests that response journals "provide the freedom to focus on the expression of personal thoughts and show patterns of response that indicate the meaning-making process of the reader".

Music response journals (Larson and Merrion 1987, p.254) helped students give "shape to feelings, in addition to giving shape to thoughts".

Art:

Harste (1984), in a study investigating the relationship between language and thought, concluded that "alternate communication systems (like art) support language and language supports alternative communication systems" (p.207).

For example:

> *Nathan, age 3, uses a linear, wavy line for writing but a circular, more globally central set of markings for art*
> *Shannon, age 3 ,on the other hand, does just the opposite, using a series of linearly organized circles for writing , but a series of up-and-down lines centrally positioned for art. (p.83).*

The above example gives evidence that personal response in a particular communication system can be diverse. Providing students with the flexibility to respond in writing or art would support their learning. Harste (1988), making reference to a visual response strategy called "sketch to stretch," states "seeing something familiar in a new way is often a process of gaining new insight" (p.4).

Holdaway (1980) documents the necessity for a variety of independent artistic activities related to reading, and suggests that many materials should be made available for students to have the opportunity to pursue the exploration, the design and the construction of two and three dimensional creations.

Music

Holdaway (1980) emphasizes the importance of creating a desire for personal expression by structuring a range of activities related to reading. For example, in music he explains:

> *Creating sound pictures, tunes or accompaniment for ballads, sound effects for dramatic or radio presentations, and dance rhythms help children to focus attention on mood, atmosphere and emotional tone (p.59).*

As well, Moffet and Wagner (1983) suggest that when music is used as a response to language it has the power to evoke strong moods and feelings and can stimulate students into movement activities (p.101).

Movement and Drama

Heathcoat (1976) suggests that a conscious employment of the elements of drama literally brings out what children already know but don't yet know they know (p.13). She also believes that drama allows students to work from the "inside out" so they can "unravel their feelings" and respond in ways that reflect their own interpretative meanings. For example, in drama, students "have to use discursive and non-discursive symbols to sort out their thoughts, beliefs and feelings" (Juliebö, Thiessen and Bain, 1991, p.8). When students involved in a study of inner city kids and senior citizens were faced with the dilemmas of these groups, role playing enabled them to view themselves and others from different perspectives (Dewar and Juliebö, 1990, unpublished

paper) thus developing thought by moving from "spontaneous" to "scientific" (Vygotsky, 1986).

Research presents evidence that the implementation of a Reader Response structure should provide the opportunity for learners to make responses in a variety of communication systems. Therefore, a multi-dimensional response approach will be implemented in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The framework of this research design was implemented from a teacher as researcher perspective, and was set in a grade three classroom of twenty-six students in an urban elementary school. The school is located in a middle to high socio-economic community and serves children from kindergarten through grade six.

Methodology

This teacher researcher inquiry is a qualitative study that is descriptive and exploratory in nature. The process of gathering data adheres to the **naturalistic** principles that Bogden and Biklen (1982) describe as having the following characteristics:

a) As I investigated the nature of personal response in my grade three classroom, I used extensive observations to gain "insight" into the nature of the participants, as well as their individual and collaborative behaviors while they described their thoughts and feelings about literature (p.27).

(b) "Mutual trust" was established within the classroom community before, during and after the inquiry.

(c) The reading response workshop "process" in which the students were involved each day assisted the answering of questions related to the "negotiation of meaning" during collaborative sessions (p.28).

(d) The "direct source of data" can be best understood in a classroom that provides "a context that is a natural setting" (p.27).

(e) Using a variety of data sources such as informal conversations, tape and video interactions, reading response journals, projects and field notes provided "triangulation", or a cross check for data interpretations (Guba, 1981, p.84) and ensured the data collected had both "scope and depth" (Spindler, 1982, p.43).

The Teacher as Researcher

Britton (1983), a strong believer in the teachers as researchers model, says that "effective teaching is grounded in inquiry." (p.13). He argues that teachers need to step back and take a long look at the process of teaching in their classrooms and discover what works, and what doesn't work, for children and teachers alike. The natural setting of a teacher's classroom, says Strickland (1988), will provide a teacher researcher the opportunity to "observe the research participants while they are actively engaged with others for the purpose of learning; thus making the interactions relevant and more clearly understood in their particular educational environment" (p.56). Bissex (1987) also suggests that a teacher researcher who is "an observer, a questioner, a learner" becomes "a more complete teacher" (p.4). The teacher researcher is also able to ask students to clarify their actions and intentions on tape, to ensure that data are "credible" with "member checks" (Guba, 1981, p.85).

As part of my graduate studies, I pursued my interest in literature and personal response by exploring a variety of theories pertaining to reader response, and language learning. I researched, wrote and presented my research proposal, and felt prepared for an exciting year as a teacher researcher. But as the beginning of the fall term grew near, and a new year of teaching was about to commence, I began to wonder what my "quiet form of research" (Britton, 1987, p.15) would really be like. How would my role as a teacher researcher unfold differently from my *previous* role as a teacher? Could it be that much different?

Initially, as always, my personal qualities of professional commitment, risk-taking and high energy provided the fuel for my new beginning. I reflected on previous years of practice and my year of study, and found myself becoming more aware of the process of reflection, and how instrumental it has been in the shaping of my beliefs about learning. According to Maturana and Varela (1987) reflection is "a process of knowing what we know. It is the act of turning back on ourselves to bring forth a wealth of possible meanings, a myriad of possible worlds." (p.24)

So, with my research proposal in mind, I began by concentrating on specific curriculum outcomes, expectations and indicators. Soon my long range plans began to take shape. It seemed to me that as a teacher researcher planning and organizing for instruction, I should again concentrate on many of the same beliefs on which my practice had previously been based: motivation, active participation, demonstration, risk taking, talking, reading, writing, sharing, individual and group needs, respect, choice, shared decision-making, support,

independence, self respect, celebration and fun. In this way, my year as a teacher researcher began like any other year of practice.

However, as a teacher researcher, I felt differently about most challenges, mainly because I seemed to question the authenticity of everything. Change had always been a healthy component of my previous practice, but, as a teacher researcher, I became more cognizant of the need to do some things differently. I also became more conscious of the resistance of other teachers to accept new challenges in their own classrooms. As I concentrated on the practices I wanted to change, I realized how important it was to document my thoughts and feelings. Immediately following significant classroom events I conscientiously made entries in my journal. I also found myself listening more attentively to what children were saying, both to me and to others. At recess, I would search out children from my classroom to observe them in play, hoping an incident might provide me with some direction to improve my classroom practice. As a teacher researcher, I believe I began to pay more attention to everything I did. I listened more attentively, I questioned my children differently, I documented my observations more extensively and I reflected more seriously on the events of each day, to determine the changes that I would implement the next day. According to Britton's (1983) description, I felt I was becoming a teacher researcher because my form of research was evolving out of questions that were directly related to my daily practice.

Building My Research and Learning Environment

I believe that the process of building a safe, secure and caring classroom environment, where optimal learning can occur, begins the first day of the school term and continues every minute, every hour, every day throughout the year. My first encounter with children in any classroom is an exhilarating and challenging experience, because I enjoy creating an atmosphere where every child can feel comfortable and worthwhile, both as an individual, and as a member of the classroom. It is magical to see the combined personalities and energies of everyone meld to create a 'special' place. As Max van Manen (1986) explains "atmosphere is a vapor-like sphere which envelopes and affects everything" and it is "a way of knowing and being in the world." (p.32).

Classroom environment depends on **relationships.** It is therefore essential to demonstrate the importance of establishing positive relationships with each other. Storytelling is one of the best ways I know to build those relationships, so it becomes a major event in the life of my classroom. I share some of my life experiences using photographs of my summer, and I select appropriate literature to read aloud to the children. When we huddle close together to listen to the stories of others, we identify and talk about our common thoughts and feelings. I believe this time spent focusing on personal and public storytelling builds close relationships that provide the foundation for an open, creative and supportive learning environment. As Calkins (1990) says,

establishing routines and rituals in September is not as important as nurturing "the intangible spirit that can matter more than anything." Sharing "incredible pieces of literature" is definitely one way of doing this (p.21).

Establishing this positive classroom environment became an extremely difficult task as my year as teacher researcher began. Many of my students were particularly rowdy, and didn't show respect, kindness or caring for each other. I began a pro-social theme of "Feelings", during which we brainstormed, discussed and practiced the kinds of behaviors required to create a safe and happy classroom. After a few weeks, some classroom routines were in place, but many of the relationships developing between my students were still poor. I continued to encourage my students to share more and more life experiences with each other, so a sense of mutual trust, respect and understanding would be created. I spent many minutes of each day leading students through role playing sessions to learn positive strategies for dealing with problem behaviors, and I provided plenty of opportunities for my children to practice cooperative learning strategies. According to Johnson and Johnson (1984),

> *There is a deep human need to collaborate*
> *and build personal relationships with supportive peers(p.71).*

Cooperative Learning Strategies

Think-Pair-Share, Numbered Heads, Round Robin and Round Table adapated from Kagan (1990) are the strategies I emphasized most, because they introduced my students to a positive team approach to learning.

THINK-PAIR-SHARE	NUMBERED HEADS	ROUND TABLE	ROUND ROBIN
1. Students listen Teacher questions	1. Number off in your group	1. The question	1. The question
2. Students think of a response	2. Question	2. Each person writes an idea as paper goes around the table	2. Students *tell* their ideas around the table
3. Students pair up and discuss ideas	3. Heads together! (agree)	REVIEW PRACTICE BRAINSTORMING	LIST PRACTICE TEAM REVIEW
4. Students are invited to share with whole group	4. Heads up!		
5. Students may WEB or MIINDMAP ideas	5. Share: My team.....		
*Teacher times each step			
*Teacher uses signals throughout the steps			

Figure 1 : Cooperative Learning Strategies

As my students worked together using these simple cooperative learning structures, their communication skills and accountability for learning dramatically improved. They were able to make better decisions related to problem solving situations that arose in their groups, and they began to develop more acceptance and understanding of each other. Caring relationships began to form. For example, one day during our reading response workshop, one group spent time inventing a sign system (hand signals) so they could communicate with each other without disturbing others. When they were ready for a group conference, each student would notify the leader by walking over and using a hand signal. These students were showing concern for others in the room, and, before long, other groups invented their own sign systems.

I continued to focus on cooperative learning strategies. I had my students brainstorm ideas for a RRW conference format and, after a Numbered Heads session, I charted their ideas and posted them so they were an easy reference. The conference tips enabled the students to handle group sharing with more sincerity, thoughfulness and confidence.

TIPS FOR A THOUGHTFUL CONFERENCE

1) Take turns
2) Listen carefully to others.
3) Stay on topic.
4) Respond thoughtfully.
5) Be considerate and appreciative of others thoughts and feelings. (polite manners).

6) Enjoy learning with others.

7) No put downs! Encourage others!

The foundation of classroom communication had been formed, so now we could move forward and become active risk-takers in the process of learning together. As a teacher, and as a teacher researcher, I was an active participant in this process. I had set up tentative cooperative groups for our RRW, but in the beginning I observed them at work and documented explicitly some of the behaviors of the daily life in our classroom. Field note entries like the one following (Figure 2), revealed explicit data over which I reflected during my planning time after school. These data helped me make the appropriate changes necessary to facilitate the successful learning of the students.

-Mona seems frustrated in her group

-June reads much slower than others in her existing group

-Both have had French Immersion grade two experience

-Talk to them about forming a group of two (tomorrow)

-Literature should fit their ability better

-Talk to both mothers soon

Figure 2: Rationale for RRW Groups from field notes

The Classroom Organization

Following the first weeks of getting to know each other, I began to concentrate on setting up a classroom seating arrangement that would facilitate my Reading Response Workshop, prepare my students for their participation in my research study and ensure successful learning.

Creating an arrangement that would encourage both independent and supportive learning seemed to be my first important element for consideration. Johnson and Johnson (1988) suggested that teachers should include cooperative learning as a condition of the classroom. Research has shown that implementing cooperative learning into the fabric of the classroom will improve social skills, attitudes and learning. I wanted to focus on "interpersonal and small group skills" (Johnson and Johnson, 1986) to develop communication, leadership and trust, so I began the process of establishing learning partnerships with my students. Our first step in a brainstorming session was to generate a list of the qualities of a good friend. The ideas were charted, (Figure 3) posted and discussed so the students could make informed decisions and take ownership for the selection of their classroom learning partners.

A Good Friend is.....

-trustworthy	-someone to make crafts with
-likable	-someone who gives presents
-kind	-someone to tell jokes with
-silly	-someone who laughs with you
-funny	-someone to watch videos with
-nice	-someone to hang out with
-helpful	-someone who sleeps over
-patient	-someone who is fun to play with
-awesome	-someone who likes to chat

Figure 3: A Good Friend

Next, we compared the qualities of good friends and good learning partners. Before choosing learning partners I wanted my students to be aware that:

- a good friend could be a good learning partner, but a good learning partner did not necessarily have to be a close friend.
- a strong partnership is made up of people whose strengths and weaknesses complement each other.
- good learning partners need to complete the job to the best of their ability.

After learning partners were identified, each pair was seated together so they could begin to work closely together throughout the day. The seating arrangement facilitated the strategy to Think- Pair -Share. Eventually, the desks were arranged into seating groups of four, as we utilized the other cooperative strategies (Figure 1).

Other areas of the room were used for centres to organize materials and supplies, and to establish some work and display centres for the children. Our classroom included several book centres (Three I's, Science, Picture, Chapter, Anthologies, Books with Tapes, Books with Records, Magazines, Themes and Text Sets, Classroom Authors, and Memoir) a math centre, a sharing centre (where we came together to talk, listen, plan, sing, decide and celebrate learning) a social/science centre, a writing centre, an art centre and display boards for each RRW group (used for individual and group responses).

The Curriculum and Theoretical Expectations

Current literature and research studies reviewed in Chapter Two provides evidence that the nature of reader response is an important aspect of using literature in the classroom. Similar beliefs are held by (Britton,1968; Cullinan and Galda, 1994; and Purves, 1993) and appear in the Alberta Education Language Learning Program of Studies document (LLPS).

Following are key statements from the Rationale and Philosophy of the (LLPS) that caused me to include and implement a reader response workshop as part of my classroom curriculum:

- In their response to literature, learners develop and extend their ability to think imaginatively.
- Through literature, students learn about themselves and their lives and develop empathetic understanding of other people's lives and cultures.
- Experience with a wide range of fiction and non-fiction demonstrates to students the power of language to transmit thought, emotion and experience.
- Through literature, learners vicariously experience the breadth and depth of human experience and thought. (A.2)

These philosophical statements are further developed in the Specific Learner Expectations as follows:

K.5:

- relate personal experiences to those encountered in their reading, listening and viewing.
- assess the plausibility of ideas and situations encountered in literature by comparing and contrasting them with personal experiences.

K.6:

- respond to stories and poems by expressing opinions on what they have heard or read.
- defend or support their opinions or interpretations of ideas encountered in their reading or listening. (C.12)

L.2:

- share personal responses and interpretations of what they hear or read. (C.14)

In preparation for the study, I also considered the reader response procedures suggested by Bleich (1975) in order to ensure that my students would respond 'openly and naturally' when I began my collection of data. Bleich (1975) suggests that teachers give students the opportunity to respond using a four step method:

1) Thoughts and Feelings

2) Feelings about Literature

3) Deciding on Literary Importance

4) Intrepretation as a Communal Act.

I proceeded as follows:

Step # 1 Theme: Thoughts and Feelings

(A) Show How Feelings Exist Here and Now (Perception)

The aim is to have students share situations from their past experience that illustrate when they have experienced feelings, and to discuss and become aware of how their feelings are perceived differently by others.

(B) Natural and Familiar Feelings of Everyday Life Are Explored

The aim is to have students focus response on their feelings related to a variety of symbolic objects such as favorite movies and videos, favorite toys and photographs.

Step # 2 Theme: Feelings About Literature

The aim is to share individual responses with others, and to build an awareness that the natural and familiar feelings of everyday life are the same as those which appear in one's response to literature (perception, affect and association).

Step # 3 Theme: Deciding on Literary Importance

The aim is to focus on the elements of the story, the author and the reader.

Step # 4 Theme: Intrepretation as a Communal Act

The aim is to focus on how we make public use of knowledge we derive from response (p.97-104).

Prior to beginning the RRW, I decided to utilize some strategies from Bleich's Response Model to initiate the area of personal response. Bleich expected his college students to respond in writing, but as a grade three teacher researcher I wanted to provide more flexibility in the types of responses in which my students could become engaged. So I invited, encouraged and accepted responses in a variety of communication systems. To demonstrate the possibilities for response, I began a fall theme which focused on "Feelings." Some of the topics of inquiry my students responded to were:

Step #1 (A)

* Draw a picture of something you love.
* Show in mime how you felt when you lost something precious.
* Tell someone about a recent successful experience you had with your friends or family.

Step #2 (B)

* Choose a piece of music to go with your favorite sports event.
* Write a letter to a cartoon character and tell them how you feel about them.
* Tell a partner about the last video or movie you watched.

Step # 3

* Make a puppet of your favorite character in the book you are reading just now.
* Write to the author of.....and ask them why they wrote the story.
* In your group act out a short skit to show how.....felt about.....
* Create a story map to show how you would change the story if you were the author.

Step # 4

* Record yourself telling the same story to two different people. Did you change any parts? If you did why do you think you did? If you didn't why do you think you didn't?
* In your group design and build a suitable home for a homeless family.

* Make a list of why you think.....was the most important character in the book.....
* Design a billboard poster to inform others about an important issue related to the book.

After completing the theme on Feelings and allowing my students to experiment with different kinds of responses, I made further preparations for the RRW.

The Reader Response Workshop

Setting up the initial conditions for my classroom Reader Response Workshop was a process of examining, and deciding from the theories I had explored in graduate studies, what elements I wanted to include. The theoretical perspectives of Atwell (1987), Bleich (1975), Calkins (1991), Graves (1990), Harste, Short, and Burke (1988), McKenzie (1992), Rosenblatt (1978), and my own colleagues were considered.

I asked myself how I could structure a workshop approach that would be manageable, fit the needs of my students and also align with my beliefs about learning. How could I facilitate and provide opportunities for my children to become actively involved in the process of reading and responding to text in different ways? I wanted to continue to nurture the reading writing process that had been a strong component of my classroom practice, but I needed to find a

way to extend the area of response to include my new knowledge and beliefs. During the summer I re-read the material available on reader response and I created a model by meshing Reader Response theory and my pedagogical beliefs. Several goals became the central focus of a manageable classroom model of a reader response workshop: In the fall, I proceeded to present and discuss my plan with my students and, after some changes, we were ready to begin a Reading Response Workshop as part of our language learning activities each day.

Goals

1) Students will read a variety of literature every day.
2) Students will choose their own reading selections.
3) Students will respond to literature both individually and collectively, and make sense of their own interpretations.
4) Students will plan and give group presentations that highlight some parts of stories read.
5) Students and I will share the responsibility of creating a RRW.
6) Students and I will meet for weekly reflections and make necessary changes to our model.

Organizational Procedures

Time

I scheduled large blocks of time (at least 90 minutes per day), four days a week, to provide children enough flexible time to read large chunks of text, make responses to the text and to meet in RRW groups to share, talk and plan presentations.

As well, once a week we gathered in our Talking Circle to reflect on the past week,s experiences. Sometimes we celebrated changes that had worked, and other times we discussed problems that were being experienced by some groups. On one occasion, I recall a group expressing great concern over the fact that a couple members in the group read too slowly. As a result, the other two members were always waiting a long time before their group conference could take place. The class discussed the situation and suggested some possible strategies for consideration. The group decided that the two slower readers would read out loud together, so they could help each other with the difficult words. The faster readers would continue to read independently and, if they had extra time, they could select another book to read while they waited. After trying the format for a week it was decided the problem had been solved satisfactorily. These problem solving sessions helped children to relate to each other and learn to make responsible decisions.

Selection of Literature

Establishing the RRW literature collection began with a search through my own personal library, acquired over the years of my teaching career. I read and selected titles that I felt would provide a wide variety in ability, interest and genre. Then I had my students search the school library for books they wanted to add to the collection, because I believe strongly that they should take part in the book selection aspect of the RRW setup. Student participation in book selection ensured that there would be books they would want to read. Also, as stakeholders, they were establishing a commitment to the success of the workshop.

The day my class invaded the library, their level of enthusiasm was so high that the activity created quite a distraction for others in the vicinity. Later in the day, another teacher quizzed me about the activity because she had heard children saying "Isn't this awesome! I found my favorite story!" The teacher wanted to know why my students had displayed such spirit about choosing books. While explaining the process to her, I realized I was confirming to myself the belief that children want, and need to take ownership for their learning.

Once the books had been selected, the next step was to secure multiple copies of each title. I ordered some titles from Scholastic Book Club and scoured through bookstores to locate others. Some students brought their personal copies from home for our use. Before long, we had enough multiple copies of titles, so I arranged them in ability categories from EASY, to MEDIUM (at grade level) to CHALLENGING in order to accommodate the reading abilities of my class. Some of the books we selected were:

EASY

- Owl At Home
- Amelia Bedelia
- Have You Seen Josephine?
- The Magic Fish

MEDIUM:

- Tikki Tikki Tembo
- Strega Nona
- Frog and Toad are Friends
- Princesses Don't Wear Jeans

CHALLENGING:

- Charlotte's Web
- James and the Giant Peach
- Seven Clues in Pebble Creek
- Treasure Island

As our RRW continued over the remainder of the school year, I added and deleted titles to maintain interest and open the doors to different genres. The children also continued to feel responsible for adding titles *they* deemed worthwhile. As a result, our collection was always changing.

I feel it is not only important to have students select their own literature - it is vital that they be taught to recognize the reading difficulty of text. To help readers develop an awareness of the difficulty of text I select clear examples of

each level and point out the characteristics of each level. I also teach my children how to quickly "test-read" a page in a book. To "test read" a page, children open the book randomly to any page and begin to read. If they are uncertain of five words on one page then it is likely that the book is too difficult for them to read independently.

Setting up the RRW Groups

The children had already identified learning partners with whom they could collaborate when completing school tasks, but these partners were not necessarily the same individuals that were suitable in a RRW. Groups for the RRW were set up with a specific RRW criteria. After paired and small group talk, ideas were shared and charted to set some guidelines for forming our RRW groups. The class and I then decided that members of a RRW group needed to have some of the following characteristics:

- a similar reading ability
- some similar interests
- attentive listening ability
- a cooperative and kindly attitude

Once the criteria had been discussed, my students selected a first, second and third choice person for their RRW group. I took the children's choices and tentatively organized the RRW groups. The next step was to test the reading groups to determine if the reading speed of each group member was similar. Each group assembled on the floor in a circle, and decided upon a story from a grade three anthology that could be used for a "test read." I reminded my students that it was important to read the selection at their normal speed so that they would understand the story and the test would be valid. During the first week, the RRW groups met several times to "test read " many selections of story and poetry. The children make the final decision as to whether or not their group members were a good reading match. Several switches were discussed with me, and alterations were made. Finally, our RRW groups were set, and we moved on to familiarizing ourselves with the procedural steps for RRW, which I charted and discussed with the children.

RRW STEPS:

1) CHOOSE a comfortable place to meet.
2) DECIDE who will be your leader.
3) GATHER together at your meeting place with your book and your Reading Response Journal (RRJ)
4) DECIDE together what text you will read, how you will read (together or alone) and how much you will read.
5) RECORD in your RRJ (date, story, author, pages or chapters your group will read)
6) READ the selected pages or chapters

7) RESPOND in your RRJ to explore your thoughts and feelings about the story. WORK ALONE. You may draw a picture first and then explain it with a written entry. You may use a lead in if you wish. Possible LEAD-INS to make your own connections (your opinion):

I feel.....	I think.....
I wonder.....	I like.....
I enjoyed.....	I dislike.....
I wish.....	I remember.....
It reminds me of.....	My friend.....
If I were the author.....	A long time ago.....

8) CONFERENCE: Agree on a time to conference and go to your meeting place. Read and explain your response to the group and discuss. Always conference using cooperative learning strategies.

9) RRJ: Summarize and record the main thoughts and or feelings discussed in your group conference.

10) SHARE your RRJ with Mrs. Dewar (Group leader collects journal and puts them in the RRJ box.)

Response Strategies

To prepare my children for the process of RRW, I immersed them in some activities of experiencing and discovering the whole area of response. When I first directed my children to share their personal responses to our read aloud stories, I discovered they either lacked the experience in knowing how to respond *personally* or their previous school experiences had discouraged them from doing so. They needed time to explore their ideas and confirm what was of value to *them*. Often, I felt the responses they elicited were the kind they believed I wanted to hear, not what they were really thinking or feeling. The nature of my inquiry into personal response was to retrieve natural responses like those suggested by Bleich (1975), who says that students need to learn to respond as 'openly and naturally' as possible. Searching through my knowledge of practice, I knew that demonstration (Smith, 1986) was the best way to encourage and motivate students to become responding risk takers.

TALK

Demonstrations of literary response became the focus of mini-lessons (Atwell, 1987; Calkins, 1990) that I structured into my RRW model. I began to encourage 'natural responses' during sharing and discussion times, after reading a story aloud to the class. First, we would explore responses by using the thinking strategies of fluency and flexibility, then we would share our thoughts cooperatively in some Think-Pair-Share sessions. At other times I would pose a question, and the students would generate responses using the Numbered Heads strategy. I also shared summaries of stories I found on the

book jackets, and we would discuss the point of view of the critic. Occasionally, I shared story criticisms that I found in newspapers or book store advertisements, and, slowly, my students became comfortable and serious thinkers about different ways to respond to stories. Frank Smith (1986) comments on the power of such teacher demonstrations in the day-to-day activities of a classroom and the impact they have on learning:

> *We learn through apprenticeship, through collaboration, when someone shows us something is worth doing and helps us to do it ourselves (p.12).*

Responding to literature using talk (Britton, 1970; Tough, 1976) is a system young children are able to use because responses can be explored quickly, but I believe that response to literature should be encouraged in all communication systems. It is necessary to focus on different systems (such as art, movement, writing and drama) at different times, so children will gain experience in responding in a variety of communication systems.

ART RESPONSES:

Following demonstrations and opportunities for verbal response, I then had students respond to stories through art. Artistic responses in both 2-D and 3-D projects were created following the reading of a story, and then children spent time in the sharing circle explaining their point of view to the whole class. These gatherings were exciting experiences for the children, as they explored many ways to connect literature to their own lives.

Although the students enjoyed art responses, I felt they needed to explore the scope of art response more fully, using a variety of artistic techniques. I demonstrated and provided opportunities for them to respond using different techniques that were related to curriculum expectations. After exposure to these techniques and media, some popular representations pursued by the children were pop-ups, clay and paper models, puppets, and drawing and design techniques of shading, mixing colors, lettering, use of borders, perspective, cartooning and animation. For example, Jane's snail drawing in Figure 4 was prompted after reading a chapter of the Voyages of Doctor Dolittle.

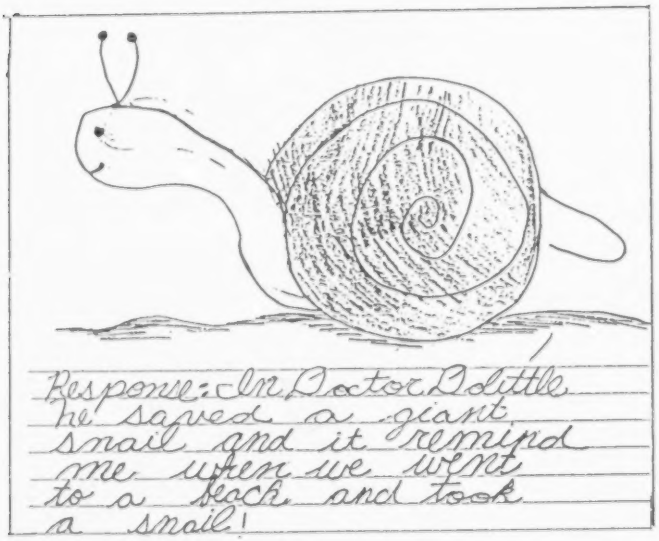


Figure 4: Jane's Snail Drawing

Story webs (Figure 5) and mind maps helped children capture their innermost ideas about stories. Sometimes the students created story webs or maps while they were reading or listening to stories. At other times they made the webs and maps after they had heard or read a story silently.

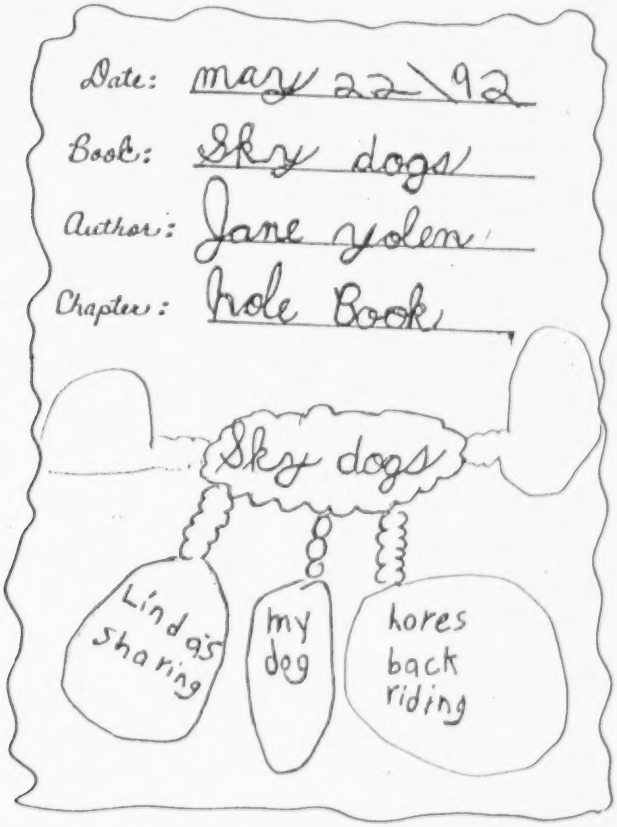


Figure 5: Story web of sky dogs

WRITING:

Memoir writing (Calkins, 1991; Harwayne, 1992) became the avenue through which my children learned to write and value many of their life experiences. Sharing the highlights of last night's soccer game, the latest video, a special birthday event or an anecdote pertaining to a family member or friend were common openers for our school day, as we gathered for our morning circle talk. This social interaction between classmates not only built trust and solidified relationships, but it also validated their life experiences, enhanced their self-respect and prepared them for connecting life experiences to reading and writing experiences. After weekends or special events in our school, we always wrote entries in our Flip-Flop journals that told about the special moments in our lives. Our Flip-Flop journals were scribbler type half-and-half books (half the page was used for pictures and half for writing) which were my version of the writer's notebook used by Calkins and Harwayne. The front half of each journal was used for entries about life, like the one from Sandra's journal (Figure 6) which expresses her deep feelings about the most magnificent day of her life (so far) and the entry from the Great Books I've Read side (Figure 7) that expresses a student's response to the book Roxaboxen.

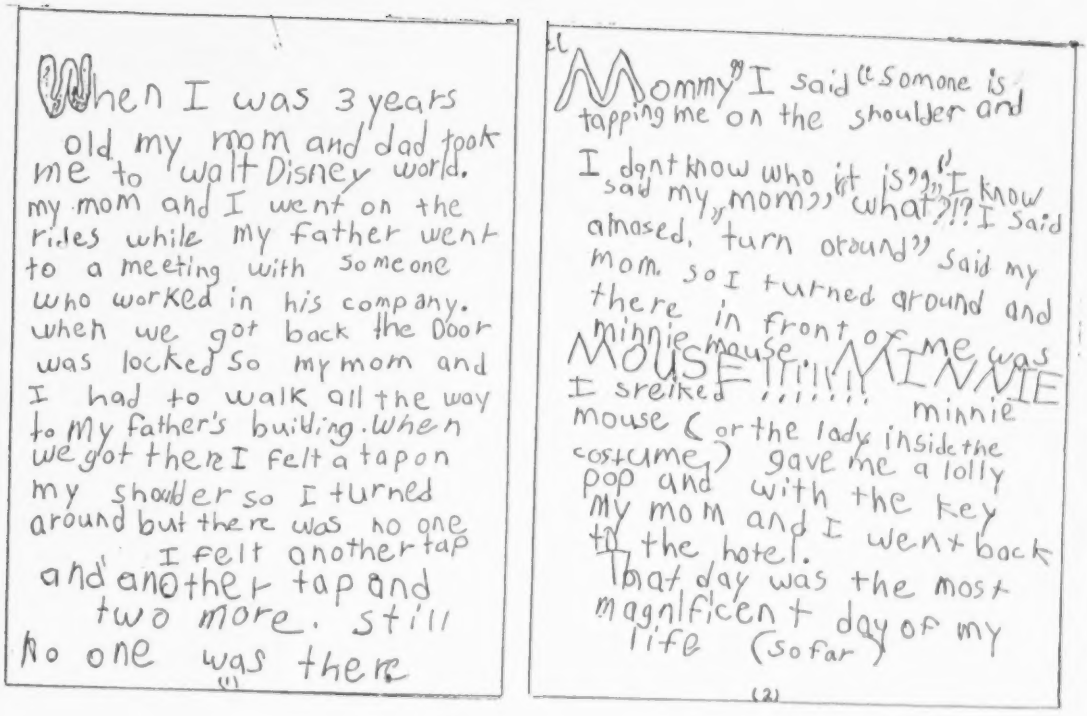
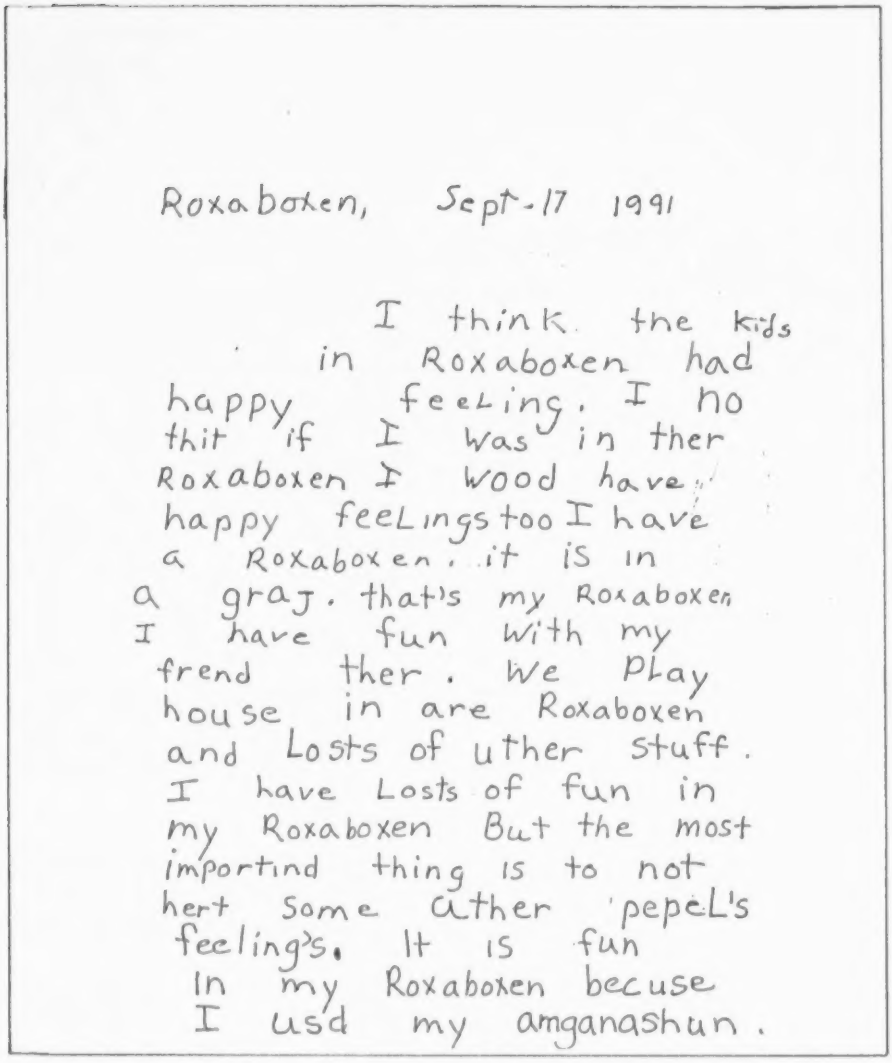

When I was 3 years old my mom and dad took me to walt Disney world. my mom and I went on the rides while my father went to a meeting with someone who worked in his company. when we got back the Door was locked so my mom and I had to walk all the way to My father's building. When we got there I felt a tap on my shoulder so I turned around but there was no one I felt another tap and another tap and two more. still No one was there
(1)
Mommy" I said "Somone is tapping me on the shoulder and I dont know who it is" "I know" said my mom" "what?!?" I said amased. turn around" said my mom. so I turned around and there in front of me was minnie mouse MOUSE!!!!! MINNIE I sreiked ..... minnie mouse (or the lady inside the costume) gave me a lolly pop and with the key My mom and I went back to the hotel. That day was the most magnificent day of my life (so far)
(2)

Figure 6: Sandra's most magnificent day



Roxaboxen, Sept-17 1991

I think the kids in Roxaboxen had happy feeLing. I no thit if I was in ther Roxaboxen I wood have happy feeLings too I have a Roxaboxen. it is in a graJ. that's my Roxaboxen I have fun with my frend ther. We play house in are Roxaboxen and Losts of uther stuff. I have Losts of fun in my Roxaboxen But the most importind thing is to not hert some uther pepeL's feeling's. It is fun In my Roxaboxen becuse I usd my amganashun.

Figure 7: Great Books I've Read

Moving my students into the process of publishing their journal narratives into a Memoir Book was a way to show them the connection between life experience and the literature they read. Every month my students would re-read the narratives in their Flip- Flop journals and decide which entry was worthwhile to polish, edit, and illustrate for their Memoir Story Book. Memoir writing helped my students to believe in the importance of their own life experience to writing, and they were able to make connections to the stories they read, and began to understand more about the world in which they live. The seeds for life-long reading and writing were sowed.

DRAMA:

Drama also provides an experience for children to explore their own feelings and take on the roles of others. I remember fondly the day we re-told the story of Tomie DePaola's Strega Nona using the technique of mime, because it was the beginning of many other fine productions the children enacted after reading a story. This form of response seemed to help the children understand the whole notion of characterization, and I watched them becoming more adept at representing feeling through movement.

Group Presentation Projects

For approximately two months, my students responded to literature individually, using different communication systems. Then I changed the focus of response and asked the students to make a group response in the communication system of their preference.

Following the process of reading, responding and conferencing, each group met to plan and decide on a group PROJECT that would be appropriate to share with the whole class. The presentation project list (figure 8) had been generated by the class, and the groups were to use it as a guide. It was possible to combine suggested ideas, or adapt them in any way to suit the needs of the group.

PRESENTATION PROJECTS:

When your group has finished reading a book it is time to share a GROUP RESPONSE to the story. All members of your group must take part in:

1) deciding upon an interesting project
2) constructing the project
3) presenting the project
4) working cooperatively

HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1) Create a shape poem
2) Write a song or rap.
3) Make a pop-up.
4) Draw a diagram.
5) Invent something.
6) Write a new ending.
7) Plan and present a mime.
8) Make a 3-D picture.
9) Act out a part.
10) Do a character sketch.
11) Write a new version of the story.
12) Plan and design a story poster.
13) Plan and write a commercial.
14) Create a sculpture.
15) Tell about the author.
16) Tell about a related issue.
17) Build something.
18) Make a story map.

Figure 8: Presentation Projects

Further response ideas adapted from Kiefer's (1983) Responding to Literature (Figure 9) were posted to give the children additional choices when considering a group project for presentation.

ART and MUSIC	WRITING	DRAMA and ORAL LANG
Murals	Personal response journal	TV News Broadcasts
Character portraits	Newspapers	TV Talk Shows
Puppets	Persuasive letters	Retelling the story
Illustrations from books	Journal in role of character	Panel discussions
Maps	Letters to authors	Debates
Board Games	Sequels, Different endings	Book Talks
Mobiles	Point of View Character Sketch	Interviews
Timelines	Comparison Charts	Dressing and Role Playing a Character
Choose music to accompany story	"Eyewitness" accounts	Choral Readings
Filmstrips	Poetry	Book Reviews
Displays	Script Writing	Pantomime
Stitchery	Letters from one character to another	Puppeteering
Sculpture	Letters to Book Characters	Character Speeches
Comparisons of Film Version to Book Version	Critical Descriptions	Readers Theatre
Story Quilt	Retelling Stories	
Dioramas		

Figure 9: Responding to Literature

The Participants

All children in my grade three classroom were asked to participate in the research study into personal response to literature. In the fall, I discussed the plans for the study with my students and their parents at our first open house. In the winter term, after my students had become familiar with my RRW model and experienced the process of responding to literature both individually and collectively, I prepared an ethics review and obtained written permission from the school district and the school to conduct my study in the spring. (Appendix A). In May, I sent a letter home to parents again explaining the purpose of the study and requesting permission for student participation in the study. (Appendix B). After all students were given permission to participate, with an option to withdraw at any time, I began to collect my data using a variety of sources.

Although all children in my class took part in RRW, for the purpose of data collection I selected the responses of the following seven students. I felt these were representative of the type of responses given by my grade three class. The following character sketches describe the seven students in this study.

RRW GROUP ONE: Charles, Adam and Norman

CHARLES

Charles was a bright, energetic and cheerful boy who displayed a positive attitude toward school and life in general. Charles had an older and a younger brother and his parents called him their "Sunshine Boy". He was an

excellent reader who enjoyed reading many different kinds of books, taking great pleasure in promoting those he believed were "awesome reads". Charles had a well developed sense of humor, and loved to tell stories and share his life experiences with the class.

ADAM

Adam was a polite and reserved boy who displayed a great deal of independence. The youngest of a family of seven, he seemed to have a wide range of interests, and was an extremely sympathetic listener. Adam read a variety of literature, always displaying a strong sense of responsibility for completing his school work.

NORMAN

Norman was a kind, gentle and patient boy who showed a genuine concern for the well-being of others. He was cheerful, always enthusiastic about school activities, read extensively, and enjoyed drawing and creating things in his free time. Above all, Norman was an extremely hard worker who always strove for excellence, yet he enjoyed fun and was developing a good sense of humor. He had a younger sister of whom he spoke rather fondly on many occasions.

RRW GROUP ONE DYNAMICS

Often, Adam or Norman searched me out to help them with problems that arose in their group due to the behavior exhibited by Charles. Most often,

Charles acted so silly that Adam and Norman were unable to concentrate and accomplish their goals for the day. Because Adam and Norman were serious and responsible workers they felt frustrated when Charles interfered with their work. I assisted them with some pro-social steps to stop undesirable behavior, and reminded Charles of the consequences of his behavior. Charles' immature behavior did create problems often, but when he was on task he was a valuable contributing member of the group.

RRW GROUP TWO: Sandra, Tina, Colleen and Jane

SANDRA

Sandra was an outgoing, friendly girl who was eager to work and play with others. Her first two years of schooling had been in a French Immersion classroom, which focused on oral instruction. As a result, Sandra was articulate, had become an accomplished reader and was working hard to improve her writing skills. When working with others, she expressed her ideas openly, demonstrated a strong sense of right and wrong, but was rigid and egocentric in her approach, trying hard to convince others to adopt her ideas rather than compromise. She was creative, bright and impatient. Sandra had a younger brother who she thought was "a pain most of the time."

TINA

Tina was a soft, gentle girl who had a strong sense of determination to succeed. She was a mature and loyal friend who always showed consideration for others. She experienced difficulty and frustration with reading and writing,

but her hard work enabled her to accomplish tasks successfully. She excelled when giving oral presentations because of her composure and maturity. Tina had a younger brother for whom she showed great concern.

COLLEEN

Colleen's personality seemed to be balanced with a soft, affectionate quality, and a strong, determined quality. She was capable of following others, or of being a leader. She chose her actions depending on the situation or individuals who were involved. She was a dependable, student of average ability who completed work quickly. Colleen had two brothers and, like them, was very involved in soccer, gymnastics and swimming. She enjoyed animals, and had just begun riding lessons in preparation for her dream of owning her own horse some day.

JANE

Jane was a capable and conscientious student who completed reading and writing tasks quickly and expertly. She had artistic talent, and loved to fill her extra minutes drawing, or working on crafts. The youngest girl of three, Jane also enjoyed telling and writing stories about her sisters' escapades, and the activities of her family. After school, she took violin lessons, and spent time playing games on their home computer.

RRW GROUP TWO DYNAMICS

When this group began RRW, they spent a great deal of time each day talking about what they would do. Making decisions became difficult because each member wanted her own ideas to be chosen and would argue her case trying to persuade the others. At the end of a session the group would panic when they realized that they hadn't accomplished much and would blame others for the situation. I would listen and sometimes offer suggestions, but I believed they needed to work things out themselves. Sandra and Jane were the most domineering members of the group, always monopolizing the conversations. They usually expressed their ideas emphatically, displaying little tolerance for others' opinions. Colleen and Gina were the patient and diplomatic ones who suggested ideas calmly, and played the waiting game until Sandra and Jane could agree. As time went on Sandra and Jane learned to balance their group skills by becoming good listeners and followers, as well as good leaders.

The Research Literature

For the purpose of collecting responses for the research study, I selected a piece of literature, The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks (Paterson, 1990) which I believed had good literary quality. The story line was rich, with an interesting plot. Character development clearly and vividly described the individuals, and set varying moods throughout the story. The setting was culturally enriching, and the descriptive language was explicit and challenging.

As well as having literary value, the story was one that none of the students had read before, and its genre was of a type that had not been studied that year. I felt this story would be both fresh and intriguing to the readers.

Data Collection

In the context of my classroom RRW, data from all students were collected, but for purposes of analyzing and comparing the nature of the responses I selected the responses from two RRW groups. Group One was composed of three boys, and Group Two was composed of four girls. The selection of seven student responses provided a heterogeneous and representative sample of responses to the same piece of literature.

In the role of teacher researcher, I observed the participants, listened to their conversations and asked them questions about their work when I needed clarification. Several times during each day I jotted down **field notes** (Spindler,1982, p.25) that described group interactions.

After reading the text, each student completed an individual response in his RRJ. Following the completion of their individual responses the RRW groups met together to share their responses. They recorded their conference conversations on audio tapes. **Audio tapes** were also made of the discussions each RRW group had when deciding on a group project. **Video tapes** were made of the group project presentations. I listened to, viewed and transcribed all tapes to gain insight into the nature of their literary responses. Further

insight was gained from discussions with my students and my advisor as we reviewed the data together.

The participants each kept a **RRJ** to record their thoughts and feelings about the literature they read. Students used their **RRJ** to make drawings and written explanations to capture the feelings and ideas that inspired their responses.

The RRW groups met to explain and discuss their thoughts and feelings about the story and to plan a group project presentation depicting some response to the story. During these **conferences** I rarely spoke, only asking questions when I had difficulty following what was being discussed.

Later during the summer I interviewed each of the participants to document their reflective opinions on the RRW model. Students were asked four questions as part of the **reflective interview** process.

1) What did you like most about RRW? Why?
2) What did you like least about RRW? Why?
3) What did you learn by doing RRW?
4) How would you have changed RRW? Why?

Student samples of drawings, writings, conversations, models and movement and performance presentations were used to analyze the nature of the participants' responses and determine emerging themes.

Data Analysis

Consistent with the principles of naturalistic inquiry field notes, audio and video tapes, response journals, conference conversations, and student reflective interviews were analyzed, and personal response themes were identified. These themes were explored in terms of the literature on reader response theory, the language learning rationale and philosophy and a variety of communication systems.

Validity and Reliability

The validity of this study is dependent on the naturalness of the setting. The students were familiar with audio and video recording and the RRW was part of the everyday classroom routine. To ensure reliability, data were collected from field notes, audio and video tapes, response journals, conference conversations, and student reflective interviews to facilitate the triangulation of data (Guba, 1981) when tapes and transcripts were examined by a professor of language.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the data collected from seven grade three students who responded individually and collectively to the story The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks, written by Katherine Paterson. The analysis of the data is described in terms of a Bleichian interpretation of reader response (Bleich, 1975).

Experiencing and Reading the Story

Group One: Charles, Adam and Norman

Group One had just completed reading, discussing and presenting a group project related to the story of James and the Giant Peach by Roald Dahl, and were anxious to begin another book. I had discussed my research inquiry with them and they were excited about being part of it. Individual copies of The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks by Katherine Paterson were given to the group and they began the RRW process.

The group met in their usual spot and flipped through the story quietly before making any comments to each other. The students began by discussing the cover illustrations and making some predictions about the story. Next, they spent a few minutes looking through the book to determine the amount of text to be read and to share some first impressions about the story. Observing the group, I noted that after a few moments Charles checked the clock and

suggested they read the "whole book" in today's session. Norman agreed saying "it isn't a chapter book anyway" and Adam was concerned with getting on with the reading, as his enthusiasm spilled out,

"Yeah, let's read the whole story. It looks interesting." Immediately, Charles, Adam and Norman went back to their desks to read the selection silently. Adam had been collecting words for his writing folder and, as with other stories, he liked to record words from the story as he read. He automatically took out his RRJ and began recording a word web as he read (Figure 10). Charles and Norman just read the story without any interruptions. All readers were oblivious to other activities going on around them.

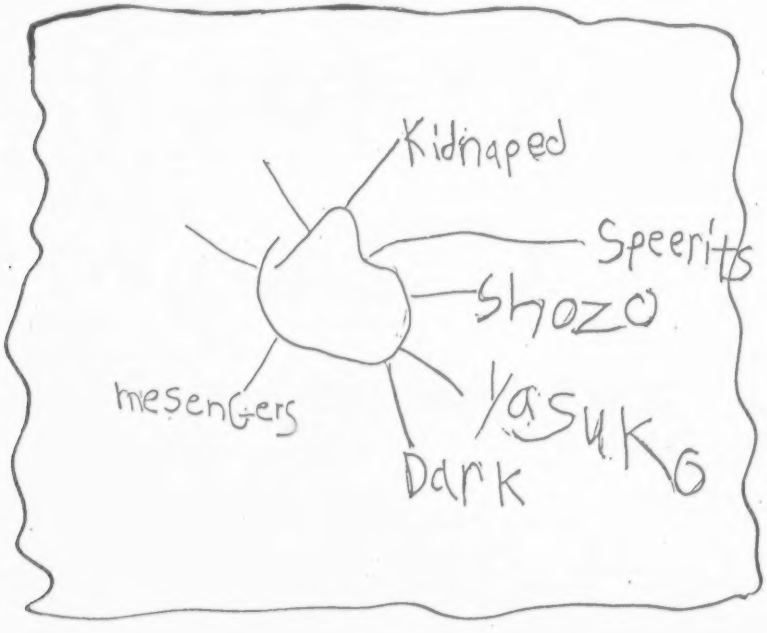


Figure 10: Adam's word web

Group Two: Sandra, Tina, Colleen and Jane

After completing a group presentation project for the story The Voyages of Doctor Dolittle by Hugh Lofting, Group Two were ready to begin the RRW process with The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks. Group Two often encountered difficulty at the beginning of a reading, because the first focus of their group dynamics was leadership. The beginning of a new reading was the time when each member exerted pressure on the others to try to gain ultimate control. My teacher role at this point was to guide a discussion with the group. I had them concentrate on the characteristics of cooperative group learning by talking about what they should say and do. Eventually, they resolved their problem, after being reminded to think about what cooperative learners do and say. They realized very quickly that cooperation meant shared responsibilities for all members of the group and that each would get their turn. Quickly, they prepared themselves for the reading of the text. Once the books were in their hands I observed the behaviors that took place between them. This group, unlike Group One, spent little time discussing the cover and predicting what would happen in the story. They were more concerned with looking over the pages to determine how to organize the sections of the book for reading. Finally a consensus was reached, and they decided to read the whole book in one sitting. They remained in their circle arrangement on the floor because they "always felt more comfortable" sitting together in a circle when reading the book silently. When I inquired why they preferred to stay together rather than go off to their own individual reading spot, they revealed the necessity of having the group members nearby in case someone needed help pronouncing or

understanding unfamiliar words. In general, they read silently and intently. Tina asked Colleen to help her with a couple words and when Colleen was unable to help her she approached me for assistance. The others read independently without any consultation.

Responding to the Story Individually

Once the group members had completed reading the story independently, the next step in the workshop process was to draw a picture response to the story and explain it in writing, in a RRW journal. The students had established the routine of working independently on their responses and usually waited for all to finish before sharing their work with others in their group.

Group One Individual Literary Responses

As Group One gained more independence and took ownership for the RRW process it became increasingly apparent that they needed to collaborate and share their work at different times during the process. Collaboration took place whenever the need arose and sometimes it happened before they completed their individual response and set a conference time. For instance, I noticed Norman approach Andy and Charles after he had finished the pencil draft of his drawing and they talked about their responses, revealing the reasons for their drawings. They drew their favorite scene and/or character.

Norman: "What are you drawing? "

Adam: "I really like the forest scene."

Norman: "I drew the drake because he is my favorite character."

Then Norman approached Charles's desk and asked,

Norman: "How do you like my Mandarin duck, Charles?"

Charles: "Pretty awesome! You're doin' the same as me. The drake, too, is my favorite!"

Later, after Charles, Adam and Norman completed their drawings and applied colors, they wrote an explanation of their response to the story. When their RRJ entries were finished they met to share and talk more extensively about them. The students left the classroom and taped their responses in a quiet corner of the library.

Charles's Response

Charles drew a picture of the Mandarin drake, applied bright color to it and explained his picture as shown in Figure 11.

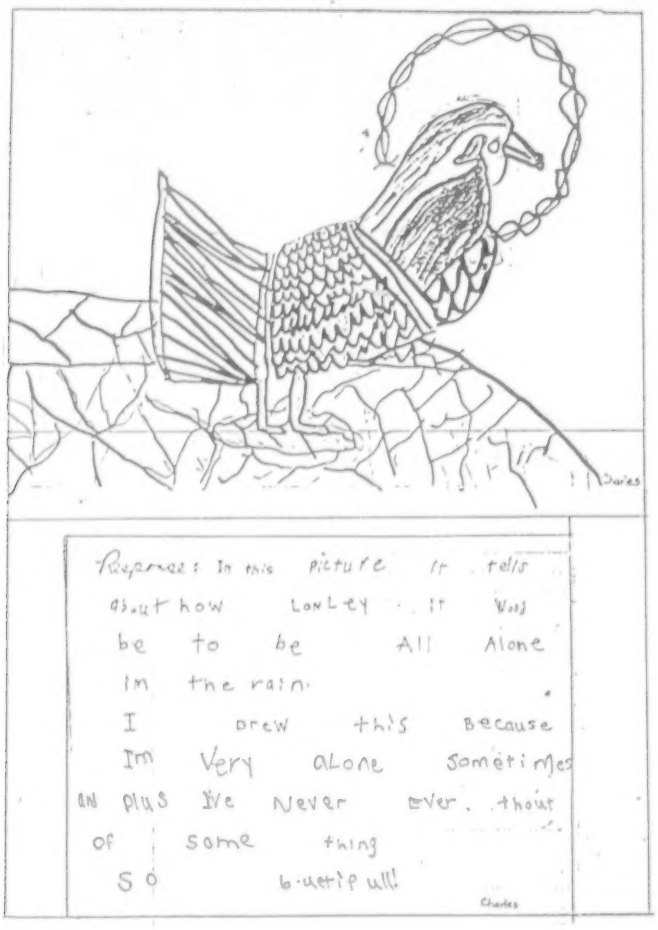


Figure 11: Charles' journal response

"In this picture it tells about how lonely it would be to be all alone in the rain. I drew this because I'm very alone sometimes and plus I've never ever thought of something so beautiful."

Adam's Response

Adam drew a forest picture with the name of the story overlapping the visual. He chose bright colors for the title lettering but used light and dark gray shades for the background forest. His picture and description is shown in Figure 12.

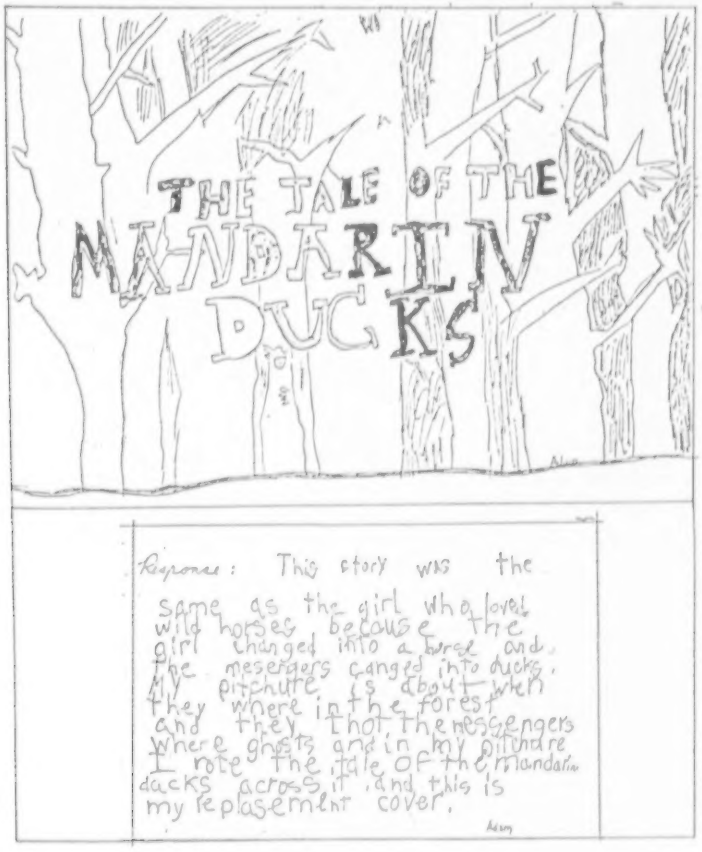

THE TALE OF THE
MANDARIN
DUCKS
Response: This story was the same as the girl who loved wild horses because the girl changed into a horse and the mesengers changed into ducks. My pitchure is about when they where in the forest and they thot the messengers where ghosts and in my pitchure I wrote the tale of the Mandarin ducks across it and this is my replasement cover.
Adam

Figure 12: Adam's journal response

"This story was the same as the girl who loved wild horses because the girl changed into a horse and the messengers changed into ducks. My picture is about when they where in the forest and they thought the messengers were ghosts and in my picture I wrote the Tale of the Mandarin Ducks across it and this is my replacement cover".

Norman's Response

Norman drew a picture of the Mandarin drake and applied vivid colors to his picture. The title of the story was written above the drake and accented with two colors. Following, in Figure 13, is his drawing and the written explanation of his response.

The Tale of the Mandarin Duck
Response: In this story, one of the caracters was a drake. He was one of my favorite caracters because of his colurs. He was one of the mandrin ducks.
Norman

Figure 13: Norman's journal response

"In this story, one of the characters was a drake. He was my favorite character because of his color. He was one of the Mandarin ducks."

Group Two Individual Literary Responses

Group Two sat close during reading time to help one another and separated for their RRJ work. As they finished reading the text they made general comments about the story to each other. Tina questioned Colleen, but she was guarded in her response, probably because she wanted to keep her ideas to herself for the time being.

Tina: "What are you going to do in your journal?"

Colleen: "Oh my, I don't know! I just liked all of it, I can't decide!"

Tina: "Oh! Well, I know what to do. See ya later."

Jane shared her excitement about the fact that the story was a Japanese tale and said to Colleen:

Jane: "Don't you just love the kimonos? I have this one that's red from my Grandmother."

Colleen: "Really, I bet it's nice!"

Jane: "Why don't I bring it?"

As Sandra made her way to her desk she searched me out and informed me that her dad had a wooden duck in his office which resembled the drake in the story. Then she went directly to her desk and began to draw. The others eventually began to work in their RRJ, too. The students in this group were intent on observing the 'copyright rule', so they did not talk to each other or show each other their literary responses until they had been completed. The importance of the 'copyright rule' had been one of the aspects of the process of writing that we had discussed during our read aloud sessions. I believe these students were strict about adhering to this rule, so they waited until all entries

had been completed before sharing theirs. When they finished, they would signal the leader of the group to indicate that they were ready to conference. Two members of the group usually finished very quickly. As they waited for the other group members to finish they went on with some work of their own choice. One chose to read a chapter book and the other girl, who attended Saturday school to learn her first language, studied in a word book to improve reading and writing in her first language.

Sandra's Response

Sandra drew a picture of the Mandarin duck and his wife swimming along on a sunny afternoon, prior to the capture of the drake in the story line. No part of the actual story illustrations depicted the ducks swimming along together as Sandra has shown them in Figure 14.

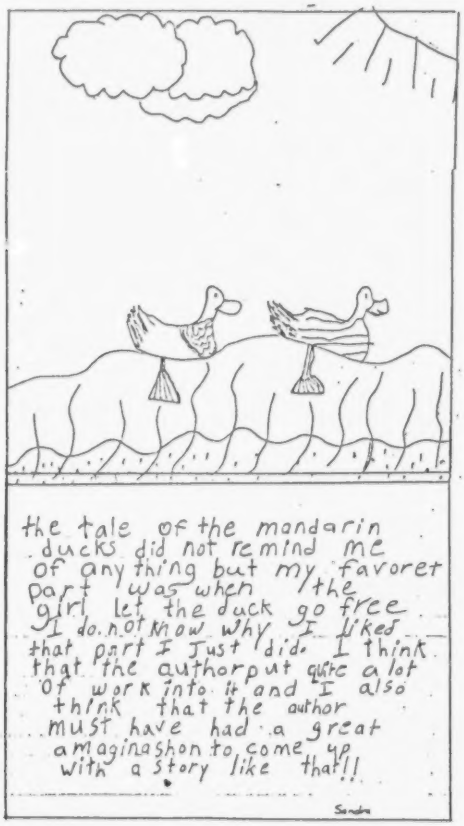

the tale of the mandarin ducks did not remind me of anything but my favoret part was when the girl let the duck go free. I do not know why I liked that part I just did. I think that the authorput quite a lot of work into it and I also think that the author must have had a great amaginashon to come up with a story like that!!
Sandra

Figure 14: Sandra's journal response

"The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks did not remind me of anything but my favorite part was when the girl let the duck go free. I do not know why I liked that part I just did. I think that the author put quite a lot of work into it and I also think that the author must have had a great imagination to come up with a story like that!"

Tina's Response

Tina drew a picture of three main characters; the lord, Shozo, the lord's chief servant, and Yasuko, the kitchen maid. She explains her response in Figure 15.

the tale of the mandarin Ducks.
In the story Shozo and Yasuko went to court because they took one of the Ducks from the emperor. and when you take something from the emperor you will get into big trodol. and that is what I have Drawin. Shozo the man and yasuko the women have ben forst to go to Court by the emperor.
Tina

Figure 15: Tina's journal response

"In the story, Shozo and Yasuko went to court because they took one of the ducks from the emperor and when you take something from the emperor you will get into big trouble and that is what I have drawn. Shozo the man, and Yasuko the woman have been forced to go to court by the emperor."

Colleen's Response

Colleen drew a picture of the one of the Mandarin ducks. Her picture explanation is seen below in Figure 16.

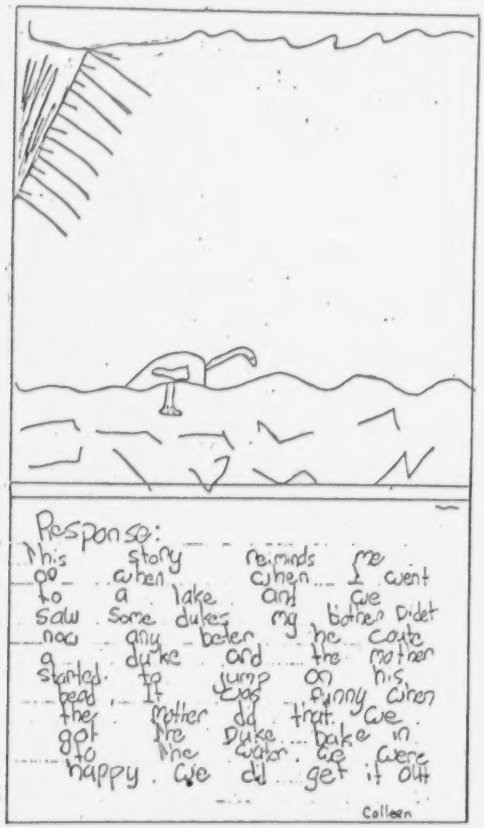

Response:
This story reminds me of when I went to the lake and we saw some ducks. My brother didn't know any better so he caught a duck and the mother started to jump on his head. It was funny when the mother did that. We got the duck back into the water. We were happy we did get it out.
Colleen

Figure 16: Colleen's journal response.

"This story reminds me of when I went to the lake and we saw some ducks. My brother didn't know any better so he caught a duck and the mother started to jump on his head. It was funny when the mother did that. We got the duck back into the water. We were happy we did get it out."

Jane's Response

Jane drew a picture of the Mandarin drake and put him in a Japanese cultural setting. Her explanation appears below in Figure 17.

This book remined me of
when I saw this duck
It look very Inugered it
had big colorful shiny wings
It looked fantastic. The bird
looked like a pretty feathered
bird with differnet colors!

Figure 17: Jane's journal response.

"This book reminds me of when I saw this duck. It looked very interesting. It had big colorful, shiny wings. It looked fantastic. The bird looked like a pretty feathered bird with different colors."

Emerging Literary ResponseThemes

I examined each student's drawing and explanation by talking with the group as they met, and listening to their taped conferences. It became evident that specific and unique themes had been perceived by each student. The themes identified by the students were representations of their own personal thoughts and feelings about the text as they read and worked through the RRW process of literary response.

Group One Individual Literary Response Themes

Charles' Themes

The two themes emerging from Charles' responses are **loneliness** and **beauty**. Charles tells about his own feelings of loneliness that he would experience if he were alone in the rain in the forest. Although part of the story takes place in a dark forest , no rain scenes are part of the actual text. It seems that his personal experience stirred within him a connection between rain and loneliness. He also reveals his amazement at the beauty of a drake. He explains, "I thought about the drake, lots...I thought about that because he was really pretty."

Adam's Themes

Fear and **change** are the two themes that emerge from Adam's responses. Adam's drawing is his own interpretation of how he felt about the darkness depicted in the forest scene illustrations in the book . He added face and body features of a ghost-like creature peering out from behind a tree. He explains that he drew the forest scene with a ghost appearing from behind the trees because "it must have been a very scary place for Shozo and Yasuko 'cause when they are in the forest it was really dark and when I was little I was really afraid of the dark." Adam also identified the theme of change that occurred in this story and another one he had read earlier in the year. He explained that both authors were able to change people into animals in the story development. When I asked him to explain why the author would do this he said, "Just to make it interesting,..... I guess." He seems to be developing an awareness of the voice and power of the author, and some notion of symbolism.

Norman's Themes

The dominant themes that are presented through Norman's response are **color** and **characterization.** His feelings about the text are mentioned in a straightforward way when he declares the drake is his favorite character because of his colors. "I like the drake because of all his colors...um...did you know I've never seen a drake....I made a picture of ....um.....the drake and I don't know where he could be but..... they must be amazing things.....wherever they are." Norman's drawing contains many details and an array of vivid and magnificent colors. When asked about the colors, Norman pondered and said

simply, "I don't know how to explain why I like his colors... I just like them....nice...they're nice." Norman's responses are connected strongly to his life experiences outside of the school community. He had been taking his first set of art lessons and was learning to apply his new knowledge about the area of color to the world around him. As well, he is a particularly curious individual who appears to be fascinated by this animal character that is new to him.

Group Two Individual Literary Response Themes

Sandra's Themes

Sandra's response centred on the themes of **freedom, fear** and **beauty** as she explains "My favorite part was when the girl let the duck go free". During an explanation of her story web, Sandra talked about Shozo and Yasuko getting lost in the woods, and how it reminded her of her brother....."My brother got lost in West Edmonton Mall". She also seems captivated by the beautiful clothes in the story....."They wore a lot silk dresses and it reminded me of my own silk dress". Her reference to beauty goes further as she includes an identification of the beautiful work of the author. She remarks , "I think that the author put quite a lot of work into it.....she had a great imagination".

Tina's Themes

The dominant themes that emerge from Tina's response are **fear** and **strength.** Tina discusses the fearful feelings of the drake...."I thought the Mandarin duck would be ....very afraid....when he got taken away from his home". She also talks about the strength of Shozo and Yasuko in the court scene when they are forced by the emperor to take their punishment for stealing his duck. She says: "I thought it was pretty strong to tell the truth in court...and...to face the others".

Colleen's Themes

The themes emerging from Colleen's response are **caring** and **freedom**. She describes how she likes ducks because she saw some at a nearby lake when her family were visiting at her Grandparents farm one weekend. "I liked when the ducks went up to the people and they had babies". She also explains how the mother duck protected and cared for its young..."my brother didn't know any better...he caught a duck and the mother started to jump on him". She continues by explaining her relief when the ducks were safely back in the water....."We got the duck back in the water...we were happy we did get it out of the net."

Jane's Themes

The themes prevalent in Janes's response are **culture** and **color**. She shows her awareness of the Japanese culture..."there was a servant.....it took place in Japan" and "really nice silky clothes". She also concentrates on several colorful aspects in the story..."the duck...it looked pretty. It had big colorful shiny wings. It looked beautiful.....like a pretty feathered bird with different colors."

A Bleichian Interpretation Of the Individual Literary Responses

The students' individual responses clearly showed that they transacted with the Mandarin duck as they used their own experience to make sense of the text (Rosenblatt, 1978). As well, the students' responses were overwhelmingly aesthetic in nature. The work of Bleich (1975) provided further insight into the nature of these responses so further analysis necessitated reference to his work.

Bleich (1975) suggests that when students are given the opportunity to respond to literature personally, they usually refer to the feelings they remember while reading the text. He claims when they construct their responses they make connections between the text and their most vivid life experiences. The Bleichian model categorizes student responses into **perceptive**, **affective** and **associative** responses and suggests that these types of responses are usually interrelated. As we look at the responses of the Group One and Group Two participants it becomes clear that all of the participants have made reference to

their own feelings about the story rather than simply recording the story facts. Many examples demonstrate the notion that the categories of perceiving, affecting and associating are woven together in the personal response process.

The Nature of Group One Individual Responses

Charles responds using both a **perceptive** and an **associative** response. He begins by perceiving the beauty of the drake and tells us of his feelings of amazement at the unbelievable beauty of the bird. He proceeds to discuss the strong feelings of loneliness he experiences when he is left alone and how he dislikes feeling lonely. His response is an associative one not only because he states what his feelings are but also because he explains the reason for his feelings.

Adam's **associative** response reveals a strong emotional reaction to the text. The nature of his response is shaped by recollections of the 'fear of the dark feelings' he experienced when he was a youngster. He tells us that as he read the story he associated the darkness in the forest scene with the darkness in his bedroom at night. Not only does Adam associate his strong feelings of fear with the story text, but he also makes a sophisticated comparison between the story characters in The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks and The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses. He considers how the authors change animals to people and people to animals to carry the story plot.

Norman's response, according to Bleich, would fall into the **perceptive** category, because he merely states that he likes all the colors on the drake.

However, if we consider his response more carefully it seems to be a theme that is not merely perceptive but **associative** in nature. Consciously, Norman cannot explain his reason for concentrating on color (I don't know how to explain why I like colors.....) but it is possible he is subconsciously telling us the reason when he says they are nice because he is so preoccupied with his own involvement in art lessons. His art lessons have made him aware of the importance of color in illustrations and he has associated this importance with his response.

The Nature of Group Two Individual Responses

The literary responses from Group Two also demonstrate that the nature of the responses is strongly rooted in each participants feelings about the story and the world around them. The responses also fit the characteristics of the Bleichian categories of perceptive, affective and associative responses.

Sandra's responses are **perceptive** and **associative** in nature. She perceives her feelings about the favorite part of the story clearly ("my favorite part was when the girl let the duck go free") but she is unable to rationalize why it is her favorite part when she says, "I don't know why I liked that part....I just did." During the group conference she merely restates the facts surrounding the court scene and talks about the punishment received by Shozo and Yasuko as she perceived it. She also mentions the fact that Shozo and Yasuko were lost in the woods, but she associates this story event with a situation when her brother was lost in West Edmonton Mall. Another association she makes is

between the silk kimonos in the story and her own silk dress. She relates how she is impressed with the author's style, and associates this good story with the author's hard work and imagination.

Tina's responses are both **perceptive** and **associative** in nature. She perceives the feelings of truth displayed by the story characters Shozo and Yasuko in the court scene, and identifies the feelings of anger and sadness experienced by the characters in other parts of the story. Then, Tina makes her associations with the feelings exhibited by the characters. She explains that she thinks the drake would be angry because he was away from his home and his wife. She can reason why the characters feel as they do even though the text did not explain this idea literally. I believe Tina's concentration on the court scene in the story comes from her association with court and her father who is a lawyer. When her group members asked to explain why she chose the court scene as her favorite she said, "Oh, I'm not sure. I just did. I'm not really quite sure, but my father is a lawyer and he's seen lots of courts because he works there."

Colleen's response's are **perceptive** and **associative**. She tells us she likes the ducks in the story and perceives the lord as the "horrible lord." Her associations with the ducks in the story are clearly revealed when she explains about an incident that happened to her brother and some ducks at a lake. Her brother had picked up a baby duck and was attacked by the mother duck. She explains that the duck "was probably trying to defend her babies by trying to really hurt my brother so he would drop her baby.....just trying to protect it...I think." She also confirms her strong emotional reaction about the incident:: "it

was very scary....and these other babies were saying quack, quack, quack .....and it was funny when the mother did that!"

Jane's response begins with her **perception** of the servants and kings by stating that "they called them lords." She also tells us that the story "took place in Japan" and "the duck..they called it a drake." She **associates** the ducks in the story with another duck she saw at one time....."when I saw this duck it looked very pretty." She further explains that she fed some white bread to the beautiful duck in the lake.

An analysis of the nature of the individual responses of both RRW groups reveals that the students did respond in terms of their perceptive, affective and associative feelings. It also appears that the responses of Group One (boys) and Group Two (girls) were similar in this regard.

Responding To the Story Collectively

Once the participants had completed their individual responses to the story and shared them with others in the group, they began the process of collectively constructing a group presentation of the story. Presentations were designed by the groups after some discussion and reference to the presentation project lists that were posted in the classroom. Some groups made their choice by straightforwardly selecting a project idea from the brainstormed list, while others attempted to combine ideas and design something new and different.

Group One Collective Response

The Planning Process

Group One (Charles, Norman and Adam) creatively synthesized the charted ideas and decided on a Book Rating Show to express their thoughts and feelings about the story. They began their decision making and collaborations as follows:

Adam: "I think the project should be sort of like a book critic show."

Norman: "Tell them what a book critic show is ....."

Adam: "Well it's just like ....why don't you tell them...."

Norman: "It's like a show where they rate a book."

They continued their conversations sorting out what roles each would play and the types of ideas they wanted to build into the script. They usually worked well together, using words of encouragement like, "yeah, that's a good idea", and allowed some time for play once in a while. For example, Charles was singing when Norman said, "It's recording you." They all laughed heartily and carried on with the task. As well, they took complete ownership for the project. "If you do not belong to Charles, Adam, and Norman's group DO NOT LISTEN TO THIS TAPE!"

Following a planning session, the boys wrote their own scripts, prepared transparencies and collected props and appropriate costumes for their presentation. At this point, as the teacher researcher, I gave them very little direction. Each day I inquired if they needed my assistance in any way, but most often they just said they were doing fine on their own. They rehearsed

privately in a small storage room because they believed the element of surprise was an important factor in presentation, even for me the teacher researcher. As they rehearsed each day and improved their readiness for presentation, so, too, grew their feelings of excitement and anticipation. After recess breaks, I'd catch them whispering and giggling about parts of their presentation. They enjoyed the power of being in control. Finally, they informed me that they were ready to set a presentation date.

At this time they shared their plan with me. They had organized their presentation using the format of a talk show. Their overall plan and script design is shown below in Figure 18.

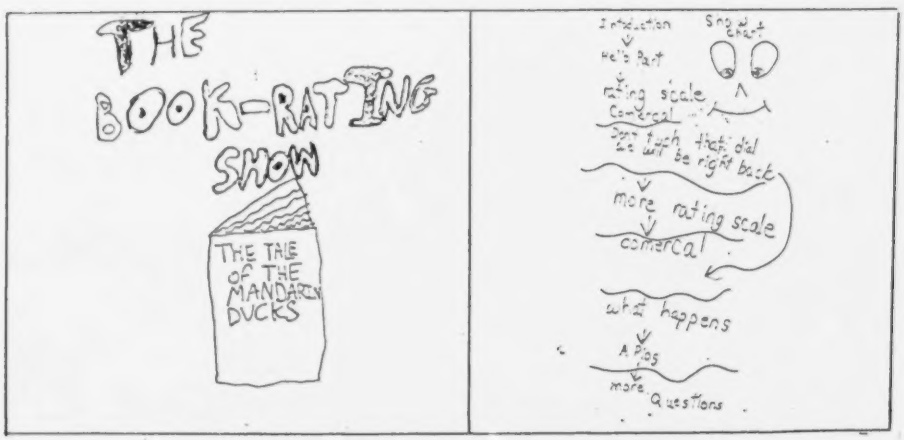


Figure 18: Group one's book rating show.

After writing the script, they selected several themes to rate the RRW book. The rating scale they constructed included themes that describe feelings, actions and story characters found in The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks. Figures 19, 20 and 21 show the rating scales for each individual in group one.

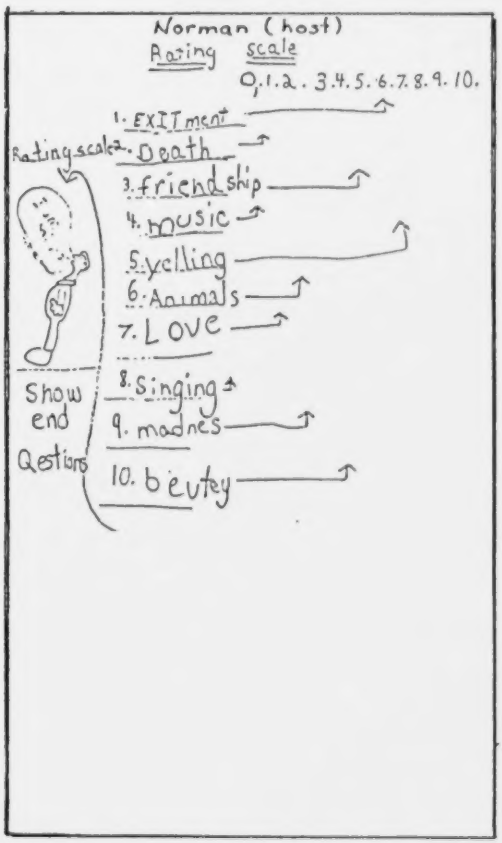


Figure 19: Norman's rating scale.

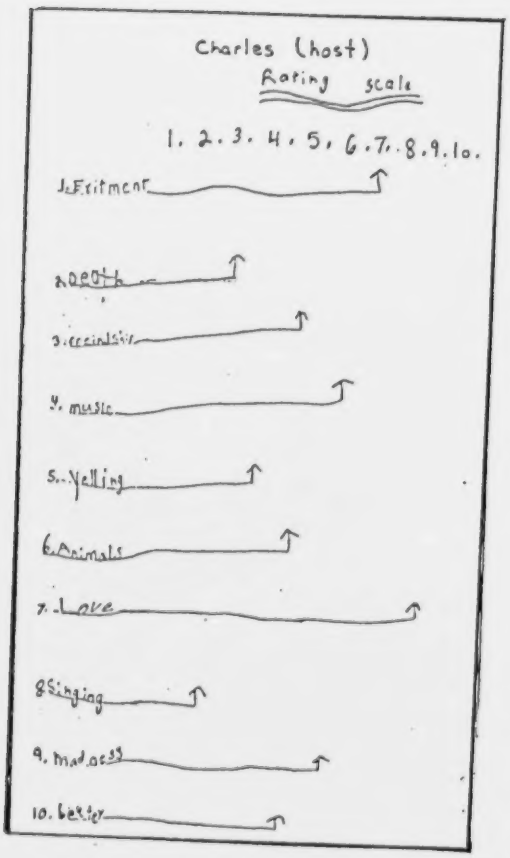


Figure 20: Charles' rating scale.

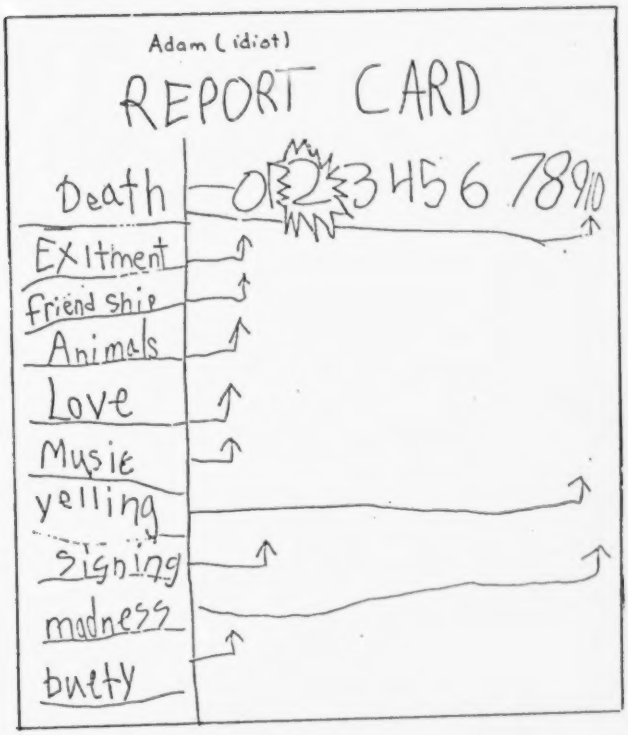


Figure 21: Adam's rating scale.

The Presentation

The boys began their presentation with introductions explaining their character roles.

Adam: "We decided to put on a show and it is called the Book Rating Show. I'll be playing the idiot in the show and in the commercials.

Norman: "I'm Norman and I'll act out the smart guy in the show. I'll be the owner of the pet shop in the Pet Commercial and sort of a singer dancer in the Japanese Commercial."

Charles: "I'll be playing something like Norman but a little different.....in the Book Rating Show I'll be playing the average guy, in the Japanese Commercial, I'll be playing one of the dancing singers and in the Pet Commercial, I'll be playing a Mandarin Duck."

The class listens and watches attentively as Adam places the Book Rating Show transparency on the overhead (Figure 18). He joins the others at centre stage and they begin.

"Welcome to the Book-Rating Show, with our special hosts, Norman, (that's me, I'm the smart one!) and Charles, (that's me, I'm the normal guy!) and Adam, (that's me, I'm the idiot.)"

The hosts Charles and Norman are seated behind a table at the left of centre stage. They proceed by sharing their ratings of the themes of excitement, death, friendship, music and yelling. Each host gives his rating of the theme, and then the idiot disagrees completely with the hosts' ratings. The idiot scribbles the theme word and his nonsensical rating on the overhead. The idiot's rating is indiscernible to the audience so he sometimes approaches the

hosts to confirm the rating he has on his paper. The group and the audience enjoyed this attempt at humor, but each time the idiot shared his rating for a theme, the hosts laughed and laughed and found it harder to become focused again on the script.

The first commercial seen below in Figure 22 was designed by the group to advertise the Japanese Village Restaurant.

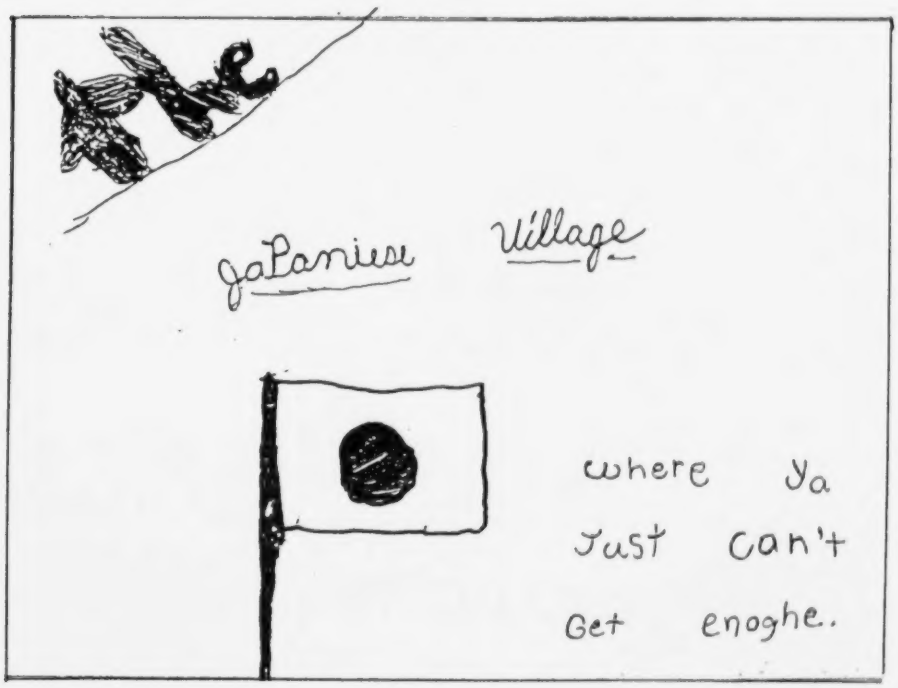


Figure 22: Commercial for the Japanese Village Restaurant.

Norman placed the advertisement on the overhead, as Adam, dressed in a Japanese kimono top, placed a Japanese bowl and chopsticks on the floor and sat cross-legged at centre stage. Taking the bowl and chopsticks in his hand he said, "Greetings! At the Japanese Village we never run out of food. You can come anytime, anyday and always remember....(Charles and Norman danced onto centre stage, kept beat with their chopsticks and they all sang together).....You just can't get enough, ya.....You just can't get enough, ya.....You just can't get enough, ya....."

Following the commercial the hosts continued to share more themes from the story. The categories of Animals, Love, Singing, Madness and Beauty were addressed and, as before, each theme was rated by the hosts and the idiot. Each time a theme was shared the hosts found it harder to stay in role.

The final commercial design was a sales promotion for Mandarin Ducks as seen in Figure 23 below.

Figure 23: Commercial for PJ's Pet Shop.

Norman placed the advertisement on the overhead, walked over to his host chair and said, "At PJ's Pet Shop we have a sale today on Mandarin Ducks." Adam walked on stage and says, "I'd like to buy a Mandarin Duck." Charles entered as a quacking Mandarin Duck. Adam asked the price and bought the duck. Norman finished with another sale reminder and they went back to the Book Rating Show.

They concluded the theme rating portion of the show with an action skit about dying if you don't read the book. The show closed with an invitation for everyone to watch next week, when their guest Robert Munsch will talk about his book, Thomas's Snowsuit. After using a literary response as their closure, the presenters all ran off stage and immediately ran back on. They placed the credits page (Figure 24) on the overhead and took their bows.

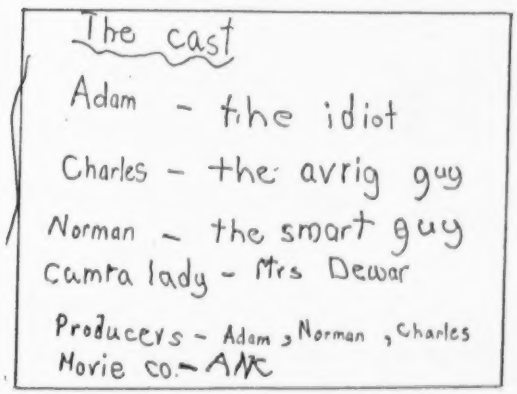

The cast
Adam - the idiot
Charles - the avrig guy
Norman - the smart guy
Camra lady - Mrs Dewar
Producers - Adam, Norman, Charles
Movie co. - AN

Figure 24: The book rating show credits.

Following the presentation of the Book Rating Show, the students in the classroom were given the opportunity to ask the presenters questions pertaining to their presentation. The questions asked centred mainly on the themes or categories of the ratings. Students generally asked for clarification of the meaning of the themes. For example, "What do you mean by love?" Charles responded, "We meant how much did they like each other in the story?....um ....the emperor didn't like the people very much....like that....."

Group Two Collective Response

The Planning Process

Group Two (Sandra, Tina, Colleen and Jane) first discussed the charted presentation ideas and talked about the type of project each one would like to do. During their discussions I heard them discuss many ideas.

Tina "I sort of like the idea of a 3D picture....I think it would be kind of neat."

Sandra: "Why don't we invent a new ending and do something like a Rap song?"

Colleen: "Listen you guys....I would like to do the mime thing."

Jane: "I got a great idea you guys...I want to do that Robin Hood thing when they use the signs.....I'll play the music."

After sharing their ideas, the group decided to use as many ideas as they could so that each person could have "their own part." They decided to plan a MIME to tell the story of the duck. A couple of days into the planning process I talked with them again and they shared their plans with me. Sandra explained that Colleen would play the duck, Tina would be the woman (Yasuko), and she would be the man (Shozo). Jane would be playing her violin and acting out the judge's role in the court scene. They had also decided to use cue cards to introduce the scenes in the mime, had talked about props, costumes, the set and had arranged some after school time to practice the mime at Jane's house.

The Presentation

The girls began by setting up the props and scenery for their Mime. They placed a blue blanket to the left of centre stage to represent the pond. A table, situated to the right of centre stage, was covered with a cloth and doubled as the duck's cage and the judge's bench. A carpenter's hammer was placed on the table to depict the judge's gavel.

Colleen, acting as narrator, walked on stage and announced to the audience that her group would be doing a Mime presentation of the story, The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks. The girls chant....5....4....3....2....1.....Action! .....and the Mime begins.

Each participant came to centre stage and displayed a large cue card to notify the audience of their role in the Mime. Jane played some background music on her violin. Colleen appeared first with her cue card as seen below in Figure 25.

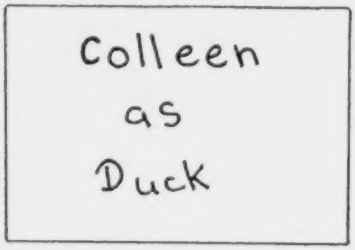


Figure 25: First cue card

As she left the stage, Tina appeared with the next cue card seen in Figure 26.

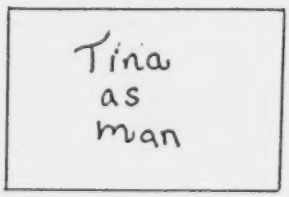


Figure 26: Second cue card.

Tina left and Sandra appeared with her card seen in Figure 27.

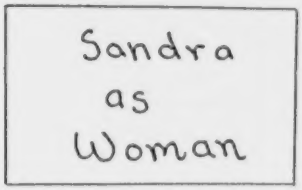


Figure 27: Third cue card.

Finally, Jane interrupted her violin playing and walked on stage with her card seen in Figure 28.

Figure 28: Fourth cue card.

Colleen reappeared with the next card (Figure 29) which said, SCENE ONE (Jane played her violin again.)

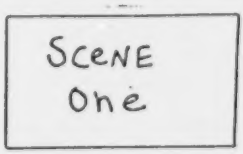


Figure 29: Cue card: Scene one.

The Mandarin duck appeared on stage and sat under the table as if in his cage. Sandra, playing Yasuko, the woman, walked over to the cage, unlatched and opened the door to the cage and let the duck out of the cage. She took the duck to the pond and at the pond she was met by Shozo. Yasuko and Shozo left together and the duck disappeared. (The pond was removed from the stage.)

Colleen entered again with the next cue card which said, SCENE TWO IN COURT ROOM (Figure 30).

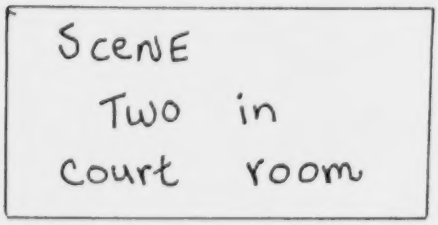


Figure 30: Cue card: Scene two in the court room.

Yasuko and Shozo walked into the court room and awaited the judge. They were to receive their punishment for letting the duck go free. The judge came in, sat down, and hammered the table to notify all that the court was in session. The judge looked at Yasuko and Shozo asking for an explanation. Both Yasuko and Shozo waved their arms around trying to tell their story. Finally the judge dismissed them, and Yasuko and Shozo left the court room.

The next cue card was brought in (Figure 31).

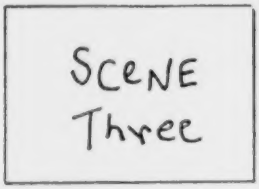


Figure 31: Cue card: Scene three.

Yasuko and Shozo entered once more. They took a long look at each other and began to dance around to show their happiness and their love for each other. The next cue card is shown (Figure 32).

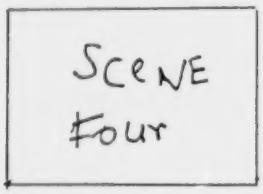


Figure 32: Cue card: Scene four - the end.

The girls came back to centre stage and took their bows. Each one was holding a copy of the RRW book and they chanted in unison, "We read the story of the Mandarin Ducks by Katherine Paterson." Each continued, explaining their specific roles in the Mime.

Sandra said, "I was the one that helped let the duck go."

Tina said, "They went to court because they let the duck go free. They felt sorry for the duck."

Colleen said, "I was the Mandarin duck."

Jane said, "I played the court judge and was the violin player."

A short discussion with the class followed the presentation. The audience wanted to know what part of the story they each liked and why they decided to do a Mime. Each girl found the part in the book that she liked best and Tina explained that "nobody else did it so we thought it would be a good idea." Colleen said, "It was fun." and Sandra said, "I liked doing Mime because it's different from people talking - instead they do actions."

A Bleichian Interpretation Of the Collective Literary Responses

According to Bleich (1975) the experience of sharing individual responses and planning a group response for presentation to the class is worthwhile for students because it gives them the opportunity to fulfill a universal need "to validate" some of their own feelings by "discovering them in

others" and, ultimately, it assists students in establishing a common set of values (p.81).

Bleich (1975) also suggests that the nature of literary responses constructed by a group of students has some correlation to the way students respond to each other as individuals. He believes that the personalities of the individuals are often revealed in the collective responses.

The Nature of the Collective Response of Group One

My observations of all the Group One respondents revealed they were always eager and curious to know what others were doing in their RRW journals. Sometimes their anticipation was so overpowering they could not wait until conference times to share their work. Often, they would share quickly and informally during the time they were composing individual journal responses. This behavior indicates the strong need of the students to have their ideas accepted immediately. Even the students whom I would have labeled as the highest risk takers were the first ones to search out others to get reactions to their work. As well, a sensitivity to the feelings expressed in the story text was shown by their ability to identify and extract feeling themes from the text and to construct a group response utilizing those themes. The theme ratings given by Charles and Norman for the friendship and beauty themes are the same, and the ratings for most other categories are very similar, which suggests they hold some common values. The theme ratings shared by Adam, the idiot, also

indicates that he has the same values because he is able to make a nonsensical rating in comparison to the other responses.

The talk show format used for the Book-Rating Presentation demonstrates that all the group members currently hold and value humor as a valid communication strategy. Although humor is a universal value, this group's use of humor could be considered age-specific because of their inability to remain in role during the entire presentation. The choice of their type of presentation; the two commercials that were placed in the show and the credits portion at the end revealed the group's awareness of modern TV talk shows and the strong influence of TV on their values and their lives.

Perhaps their limited experience using drama as a medium of response had an effect on the degree of success they achieved, but it also advises us that a dramatic response must be characterized by tension (Morgan and Saxton, 1987), the "mental excitement that is fundamental to intellectual and emotional engagement not only as a stimulus but as the bonding agent that sustains involvement in the dramatic task" (p.153) and side-coaching "the facilitating technique in improvisation where the teacher is outside the work in progress working alongside the students" (p.151) as well as freedom of choice.

The Nature of the Collective Response of Group Two

Group Two respondents usually read their selections silently while in close proximity to each other (they sat in a circle on the floor). Sometimes they helped each other with difficult words, but they refrained from sharing their ideas about the text until they had completed a picture and a written explanation in

their RRW journal. My observations of them lead me to believe that they respected each others' views and had a mature sense of responsibility toward completing the tasks required. For example, Jane said during the initial discussions of their presentation, "I don't think we should do it because it will take WAY too long!" The emerging themes that were evident in their responses points out the fact that the respondents shared some of the same opinions and values. For example, all of them mentioned truth and freedom ("truth in court"...."they tell the truth on Night Court....anybody seen it?".)

This specific reference suggests they all had a sense of moralistic justice, or, the focus on justice and the court scenes could have surfaced because of their relationship with Tina. Tina, whose father was a lawyer, exhibited a strong sense of right and wrong, ("Excuse me...I'm not finished yet.") when dealing with her classmates. As well, I believe the respondents had a good understanding of decency as it relates to the treatment of animals and humans. They depicted these feelings in their written text as well as the mood that they portrayed during the Mime presentation. The Mime also shows us that they share an interest in music and can discern the strong emotional ties between Shozo and Yasuko. The background violin music played by Jane was a clear representation of the tender feelings they felt and expressed for the duck and the couple in love. This group also showed that they could use an idea from the world around them and adapt it to their situation. The cue card format used in the Mime presentation was an adaptation of a technique used at our school spring concert. Adapting this technique to their Mime gives clear evidence of the resourcefulness of these personalities.

Both Group One and Group Two respondents showed that they could work together cooperatively and meld their ideas to build an original response that held and captivated the audience with whom they shared their innermost feelings. As Bleich (1975) claims, when students work together and share their "emotional responses" the "authority of the community is enhanced" and students learn new knowledge from the experiences.

Student Interviews

Reflection was a constant thread throughout this whole endeavour. In addition to ongoing reflection, students were interviewed at the end of the study and their responses were as follows:

1) What did you like most about RRW? Why?

The student reflections revealed a strong positive reaction to the presentation part of the process. They thought the presentations were enjoyable because "we worked together", "it was fun", "I liked doing the acting out of the plays", "I liked rehearsing because we went to other people's houses to play", "I liked using the video camera", "I liked dressing up and playing a character", and "I probably liked the presenting best 'cause you got to think up what to do".

2) What did you like least about RRW? Why?

Students shared a variety of reasons. All students made reference to specific parts of the workshop rather than the whole idea. For instance, "I didn't like working on my own because it is harder to get ideas if I work by myself", "I didn't like the conference because I didn't care what others wrote in their journals" and "I didn't like writing in my journal because it was boring just sitting there trying to think of something to write". Others voiced concern over the social behavior of some of the group members "I didn't like it when .....didn't listen to my ideas" or ".....always disagreed with us. That made it hard".

3) What did you learn by doing RRW?

The responses to this question revealed that the students had a clear vision of what they learned. For example, "I learned to work in groups", "I learned how to read better", "I learned how to get along with others", "I learned how to act during presentations", "I learned to write better. You can see at the beginning my writing wasn't as good", "I learned how to spell better by writing more", "The presentations were good entertainment for our class", and "When we couldn't get along we had meetings to work things out", "When we read books I learned about different countries", and "It helped to read faster in my mind".

4) How would you have changed RRW? Why?

The responses to this question again revealed personal thoughts and feelings peculiar to each student's experience. Some responses dealt with the social aspect of learning. Others suggested organizational changes and some were satisfied with the experience. For example, "I would move kids out of the

group if they didn't behave", "maybe work in twos, instead of fours, so you wouldn't have as many disagreements", "all persons could read different books instead of the same book 'cause then we could get an opinion about that book before we read it", and "can't think of anything to change; It was fun." or "nothing really".

CHAPTER FIVE

TEACHER RESEARCHER REFLECTIONS

This chapter will look at this teacher researcher study in terms of reflective practice. Reflection will centre on the RRW process, the nature of the responses constructed by the students, some implications for language learning within the context of a RRW and some final thoughts.

The Reader Response Workshop

Sparks-Langer (1991) remind us that reflective thinking is not a new idea and that the professional knowledge constructed by teachers is seen as "coming from sources outside the teacher and from the teachers' own interpretations of their everyday experiences" (p.37). Similarly, Wellington (1991) suggests that the search for the "meaning of reflective practice is embedded in the context" (p.4). As a teacher researcher conducting this study, I found myself in a constant cycle of thought and action based on the events that occurred everyday in my classroom. As Clandinin (1985) notes: "Personal practical knowledge is an emotional and moral knowledge. It actively carries our being into interaction with classroom events" (p.382).

It is these thoughts and feelings that were created from my observations and conversations (Bogden and Biklen, 1982), kid-watchings (Goodman, 1986), field notes (Spindler, 1982), and my quiet reflections that I would like to celebrate and share with you now.

My personal response must begin from my stance as a teacher researcher implementing the RRW process for this study. As I began this study I *felt* my perspective was different from my perspective as a classroom teacher and, as I reflect now, I *know* I became a different teacher. I have many things to celebrate as a teacher researcher because I gained new insights into teacher practice in my role. Most importantly, I have become more of a risk-taker. I feel more comfortable during the times of confusion and chaos because I know I can handle classroom situations as a shared responsibility with my students. I have always tried to work alongside students, constantly changing the programming to suit the needs of individuals and groups, but now I know I can do it and if it does not work we can change it together. I always thought that teachers had to have all the right answers about learning, but I now know I don't have all the answers, rather, the answers lie with the students, and I must gather and consider their thoughts more carefully to ensure success. I learned to be a better listener and to use the information to improve the quality of instruction I gave to my students. I was often amazed at the ability of my students to articulate their thoughts after a meaningful mediation on my part. I learned how to let students lead the focus of conversations and conferences, and to only suggest when it was necessary to add a new perspective. Planning classroom procedures was a joy because we did it together. I gave up struggling with goal setting from only my point of view and let the students help me. As I became more of a facilitator and organizer, my students took more ownership for reading the text and responding individually and collectively. Undoubtedly, I became better at recording field notes and my writing was enhanced. I began to

understand more clearly the frustrations that plague writers on those days when the ideas are hard to tap into, and on other days when there are so many ideas rushing around it seems impossible to focus. Eventually, the sense of wonder and accomplishment when the words jump off the page and really say what you want them to say makes it all worthwhile!

Throughout the study I found myself reflecting on all facets of the RRW approach in order (Patterson and Shannon, 1993) "to understand the particular individuals, actions policies and events" (p.7) that occurred in our classroom. I was able to make "professional decisions" to adjust and change my classroom practice to enhance the learning of my students (p.7). I learned to reflect often, and with a particular purpose in mind, but I also learned the role of reflection did not belong solely to me. My students were involved in the reflection process continuously throughout the study. I scheduled weekly reflection times on Friday mornings, when my students and I discussed our thoughts about the RRW activities of the week. During these times I found myself agreeing with Schon (1987) that "being willing to try something is a condition of acquiring an ability to do it" (p.120). To begin with, our sessions were short and unproductive, because the students did not voice any particular concerns and opinions. I believe they had never had an opportunity to reflect upon and direct their learning activities in this way, so they remained silent. Their inexperience with the reflective process was obvious. From my perspective, I felt there were some problems with the workshop setup and the participation of some students. For example, I was concerned about the aspects of time on task, cooperation with others, matching the text to the students' reading ability and the scope and

depth of their responses. I wondered how I could get my students to look at their work more critically. I continued to observe group interactions carefully and to study the responses in their RRW journals. Finally, I decided to select some examples of appropriate work to share with the whole class during reflection time. For instance, Tina's entry in her journal (Figure 7) was the first time she had expressed and explained a connection to the story by identifying with the same feelings as the characters in the story. Most often, her entries were simple statements of a story event. By sharing with the class, my intent was to build a new awareness related to the scope and quality of oral, written and artistic responses. I felt that my students needed to approach their work from an original, or personal stance by connecting their thoughts to their feelings and life experiences rather than just retelling portions of the text read. Even though the demonstrations focused the students and helped them recognize a broader scope of possibilities for response, I felt that their responses were still objectively text-bound.

At this point, I contacted my advisor and set up a classroom visit so she could observe my students in action, and share her thoughts on some of the problems I was experiencing. As Bruner says, "We know the world in different ways, from different stances and each of the ways in which we know it produces different structures or representations" (p.109). In my reflective stance it was my hope that another person's interpretation of our workshop would open up different possibilities for change and greater success for my students.

She led a discussion with my students that focused on two leading questions: (Why do you read a book? and Why do writers write books?) My students responded with ideas like:

"books teach you things."

"they make you laugh, cry, curious, think, happy."

"you feel like the character sometimes"

"you learn things"

"writers get money"

"it's fun to write"

"you learn to read better"

"books help pass time"

"tell about your own life"

This discussion led my students to consider more than the literal text, and it changed their notion of the possibilities for reader response. At this point I felt they began to respond subjectively. I also noticed that during our reflective sessions they were able to share genuine concerns and ask questions related to the activities that were causing them doubt. For example, one group asked if they could respond using the same medium as they had with a previous book. Someone suggested that "doing something different was more fun". The choice was left up to the group. As I observed their group preparations for another response it became clear they had chosen to use a different medium to share their story. Group values were being established.

As a teacher researcher it was important for me to have an outsider visit the classroom to work alongside my students, allowing me to become the

observer and give me a new perpsective, Following the classroom interactions, my advisor and I discussed aspects of the student responses of which I would otherwise not have been consciously aware.

From my perspective I believe the RRW approach allowed students to make decisions about their reading, their responses to reading and how they shared their meanings of the text they read. It provided an opportunity for students to read literature they enjoyed, so they could reach their highest intellectual potential. As Graves (1991) says:

> *Children need to be part of a classroom in which you make decisions. When you experiment in your teaching you show children how to learn. In a natural way, you enlist the children's help in order to build a more effective community of learners (p 9).*

Students in this research classroom seemed to develop a stronger sense of what they knew, and how they knew it and were able to ask questions that led them to new horizons of learning. Conferencing and the role of talk were an important aspect of the RRW, because discussion provided the forum for students to make affirmations about the things they knew, thus developing self-confidence. I believe more "mini-lessons" (Atwell, 1987) relating to how to discuss literature could have enhanced the students' abilities to make more critical literary judgments.

Besides the weekly reflections in the classroom, I prepared an interview questionnaire, and administered it to each of the study participants after we had completed the RRW in June. Generally, these one-on-one interviews revealed positive reflections regarding the RRW process, but they also revealed the

students' concerns about social aspects. For example. "I liked the part when we worked together" or "we had problems...all the people in our group wouldn't get along together". Sharing these explicit insights related to social phenomena confirms the notion that social context and interaction have an impact on learning (Harste, 1984).

Another prominent theme in the student interviews was their obvious love of drama. "I liked dressing up" or "I liked doing the acting out of plays". Both groups chose drama as an integrator for their collaborative response. Through this educational drama the students came "to know their own knowledge more explicitly by giving it voice in a wide variety of forms" (Creery, 1991, p.98-99). These forms included improvisation, mime, role play, characterization mixed with art (costumes and sets), music (composed and played), and visual images (overheads and cue cards). The presentations represented their 'shared symbolic knowledge' (p.104).

The structure of the workshop made it possible for the students to have clear expectations, both individually and collectively, and it enhanced the development of most relationships, both socially and academically.

As a teacher researcher, I believe there is also cause to celebrate the value of this study for other teachers. The value lies in the ability of the reader to understand the RRW process as I have described it. A glimpse at the nature of the process, and the responses evoked by the students allows the reader to gain insight into a teaching strategy that has worked for some students. As Eisner (1991) explains, "The description of the study should enable the readers to participate vicariously in the events described" (p.89) and come to know or

understand. Ultimately, teachers who read this study and value it can adapt the process to their own classrooms, and involve their students in a similar successful experience.

Finally, as a teacher researcher I found myself standing back more often as an outsider looking in rather than an insider mediating and directing students continually. Because I wanted to collect a "naturalistic sample" (Bogdan and Biklen,1982) I felt that my role as teacher researcher was to observe students learning by themselves, rather than mediating and showing them what to do. Now, I believe I should have demonstrated and shared more examples to lead students toward more critical literary responses.

The Nature of the Responses

Firstly, my belief in the power and necessity for personal response as part of a literature-based language learning program has definitely been confirmed by the nature of the responses successfully shared during the study of the story, The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks. The nature of the students' individual responses in their RRJ's inform us of the sensitivity that the participants had to their own personal feelings and how these feelings became the springboard from which they constructed their responses to the text read. For example, when Charles shared his feelings of loneliness, the nature of this individual response gives us a glimpse at the uniqueness of the response. As well, similarities in responses suggest that individuals have common thoughts

related to the same text. For instance, both Sandra and Tina concentrated on the emotion of fear that surfaced from the story, and Norman and Charles were awed by the colors of the drake. The use of response journals proved to be a valid tool for recording these personal responses (Barone, 1990). The prevalence of the associative responses constructed by the students reaffirms my beliefs that young children in grade three can respond in a way described by Bleich (1975).

The children really enjoyed this Japanese tale. They were fascinated by the characters, the dress and the customs portrayed. This confirmed Sims' (1983) observation that culturally valid literature evokes strong responses.

The Implications to Language Learning

Students in this RRW process approach demonstrated growth in learning because they took an active role in planning, making choices, reading, writing, thinking independently and sharing their innermost ideas. Experience with this model allowed students to take charge of their learning and build the foundation for becoming life long learners. As Graves (1991) suggests "When children have a choice and can exercise initiative, you will have a better chance of finding children who will be actively literate for the rest of their lives" (p.27). It sustains their pursuit of lifelong learning. Purves (1993) suggests that readers should be "encouraged to see themselves as makers of meaning", and the meaning should be constructed and negotiated while students talk and write

about the text they have read (p.355). Evidence of learning was explicitly shared during the student interviews. For instance, "I think I learned to write better and work with others", "I learned how to read better'" and "I learned to work in groups".

Delegating responsibility lies at the heart of the RRW. It develops the learner's ownership for learning and contributes to his sense of independence, as was shown when a Group Two member shared, "We had meetings to work things out". As well, this shared responsibility instills a sense of discovery about learning, and an ability to be a risk taker in a supportive environment which was noted when Charles said, "You can see at the beginning my writing wasn't as good".

I believe that the RRW process can be designed and adapted to any group of learners to meet their learning and social needs because it builds on the students' life experiences. Building on these spontaneous concepts provides a legitimate structure to accommodate the vast range of differences found in a classroom group of learners. According to Vygotsky (1978), individuals should be challenged and nudged to succeed in terms of their specific potential. He describes this potential as the "zone of proximal development" It is "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p.86). The conferencing aspect of this process afforded me the opportunity to support and challenge students as they ventured to expand their knowledge from spontaneous concepts, to the

formation and understanding of scientific concepts. Learning was meaningful and authentic, because the RRW process was tailored to the interest and ability of each student. As well, flexibility and creativity were encouraged through the invitation to express responses in a variety of communication systems.

Vygotsky (1978) also discusses the importance of social interaction to learning. The RRW process is a highly interactive learning model that develops and molds the groups into a strong community of learners. As the community of learners develops, they learn to listen to other points of view and try to accept and appreciate them. The transactional nature of the discourse during the RRW enables students to synthesize associations feelings and attitudes to create individual and group responses.

Final Thoughts

In conclusion, this study demonstrates the need to include a reader response workshop approach to the study of literature at a grade three level. Before utilizing such an approach it is advisable for teachers to involve students in the preparatory experiences that focus on feelings about literature, as suggested by Bleich (1975). While facilitating a reader response workshop it will be necessary to provide "scaffolding" (Bruner, 1986) for students to experience success, and a certain amount of demonstration (Smith, 1986) to familiarize the students with the process of literary response. Individual and

collective responses should be explored by students in a variety of communication systems. As Langer (1994) so aptly states:

> *The thought -provoking literature class is an environment where students are encouraged to negotiate their own meanings by exploring possibilities, considering understandings from multiple perspectives, sharpening their own interpretations, and learning about the features of literary style and the analysis through the insights of their own responses (p 207).*

Implications for Further Research

1) How does reader response affect children's liking for literature?
2) How does reader response affect literacy development?
3) How do scaffolding and mediation affect the nature of children's responses?
4) Why do children choose particular communication systems when they respond personally or communally to literature?

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APPENDIX A

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED RESEARCH PROJECT

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SUMMARY OF PROPOSED RESEARCH PROJECT

1) Title: Reader Response: A Bleichian Perspective

2) Purpose:

The purpose of this inquiry is to explore the nature of student responses to a piece of literature using a Bleichian approach.

3) Methodology:

The methodology that will be used in this teacher researcher inquiry is defined as qualitative by Bogden and Biklen (1982).

This research will be conducted with a class of grade three students in a large urban school district.

All students in this class will be asked to participate in the inquiry, and it will be organized as part of the daily language learning instruction. Previous to the collection of data all participants will have an opportunity to experience responding to many pieces of literature as individuals or as collaborating pairs or small groups.

Language, art, music and movement responses will be collected from informal conversations, individual interviews, taped/video interactions, written entries in student journals, artifacts and teacher researcher field notes. The data will be collected and analyzed according to the nature of the representations.

4) How the Data Will Be Used:

A collection of literary responses of six students, to a mutually selected piece of literature, will be analyzed using the Bleichian criteria of interpretation. To determine the nature of the responses, Bleich (1975) identifies and uses three levels of response: perceptive, affective and associative. Each level exhibits particular characteristics.

In this study the Bleichian model of personal response is being extended to incorporate response in a variety of communication systems, and the participants will be young children, rather than adolescents or young adults. This will therefore contribute to the existing knowledge on subjective criticism.

5) Guidelines:

1) This research will not produce physical or mental harm for the participants. Involvement in the research will contribute to our understanding of how to construct classroom environments that facilitate the development of children's efferent and aesthetic response to text which will enhance the participants cognitive, social and emotional development.

2) The teacher researcher will obtain permission from the school board, the school, the participants and the parents to conduct the inquiry in accordance with the guidelines and regulations of the university.

An information letter will be sent to all parents clearly explaining the nature of the research stressing that they may withdraw their child from the study at any time without penalty. All students will be orally informed about the study and the voluntary nature of their participation.

Clear explanation will be given as to the nature of the data to be collected and written consent will be obtained from the parents or guardians for the use of any collected data including written samples, tapes and art work.

3) As a teacher researcher, I am aware that publications will carry my name, thus revealing the site and population of the research, codes will be used to identify the research participants, and in all publications names will be changed to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Field notes will be read only by the researcher and her supervisor. Personal data which would reveal the identity of a student will not be used.

4) The teacher researcher has just completed graduate course work in Language Arts and research methodology, and is a teacher of twenty-eight years experience. She is familiar with the ethical guidelines of the U. of A. and is confident that she can make responsible ethical decisions.

5) The teacher researcher is aware of the risks involved in qualitative research and will constantly appraise her work to ensure the design and results are non-discriminatory. The teacher researcher will consult regularly during data collection and data analysis with her advisor, who is an experienced researcher.

APPENDIX B

PERMISSION LETTER TO PARENTS

APPENDIX B

May 19, 1992

Dear Parents,

Last year, while I was enrolled at the U of A in a Master of Education program, I completed a thorough study of **reader response theory** and decided to implement it in the classroom this year, because I am convinced of its value as a teaching strategy. This strategy provides students with the opportunity to interpret their own meaning from the text, to decide on and discuss the author's intent, and to extend their thinking to include original interpretations.

For the past few months, all the students in my class have been using the strategy of reading response. Reading response has provided them with the opportunity to explore literature **independently and collectively.** Students have been **reading** a story or chapter, **writing** a written response to the text and **discussing** their reactions to the story in small groups.

Now, we are also concentrating on **reading** the story or chapter, **drawing** a picture response, **explaining** the response on an audio tape and then **sharing** the recording with others. As well, after students have completed the entire book, the group begins the process of **collecting** their ideas regarding that particular piece of literature and **presenting** their ideas to the whole class in some way.

There is much that teachers do not know about how students read and make meanings from what they read. At this time, for the purpose of completing my thesis study on reader response, I would like to add to my knowledge of the subject by collecting and studying the oral and written responses that students make to stories in their daily work.

All collected samples and names of individuals used in this study will be **coded** so as to preserve the **confidentiality and anonymity** of the students' identities. If you are interested in talking with me about my study, please feel free to come and chat any time. If you do not wish your child to take part for any reason, please let me know as soon as possible. I am confident that the data collected from students in this setting will enhance the understanding of the process of learning as it relates to reading, and response to reading.

Sincerely,

Joan Dewar